

9 Voodoo² Cards Tested • Win 98: Good
For Gamers?

COMPUTER GAMING WORLD

The #1 PC Game Magazine

September 1998

Annual Fall Preview!

100

**31 PAGE
SPECIAL!**

Hot New GAMES

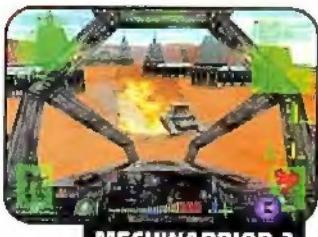
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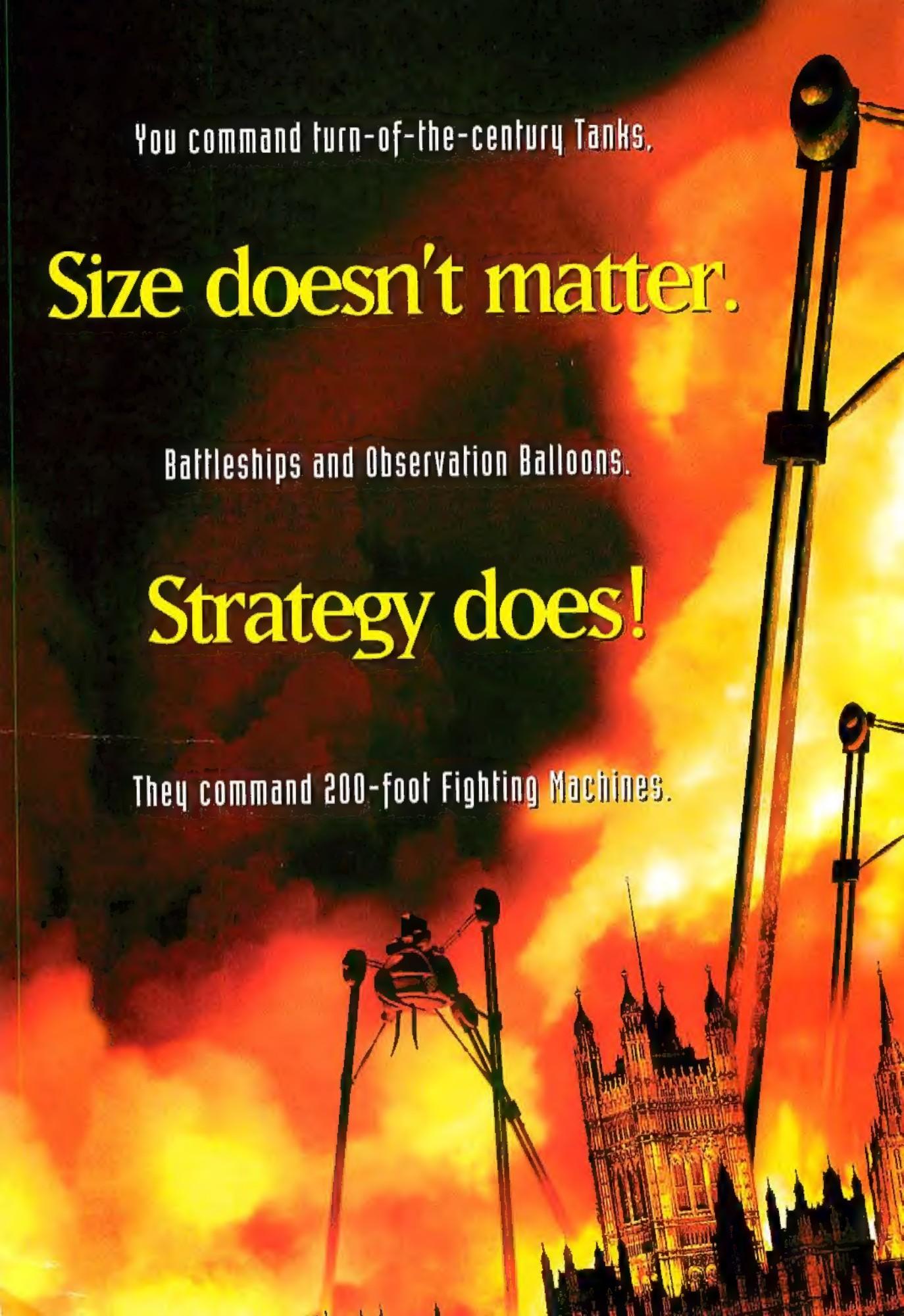


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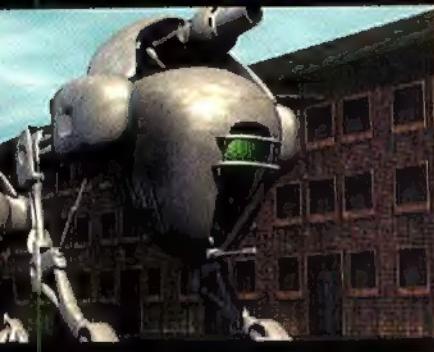
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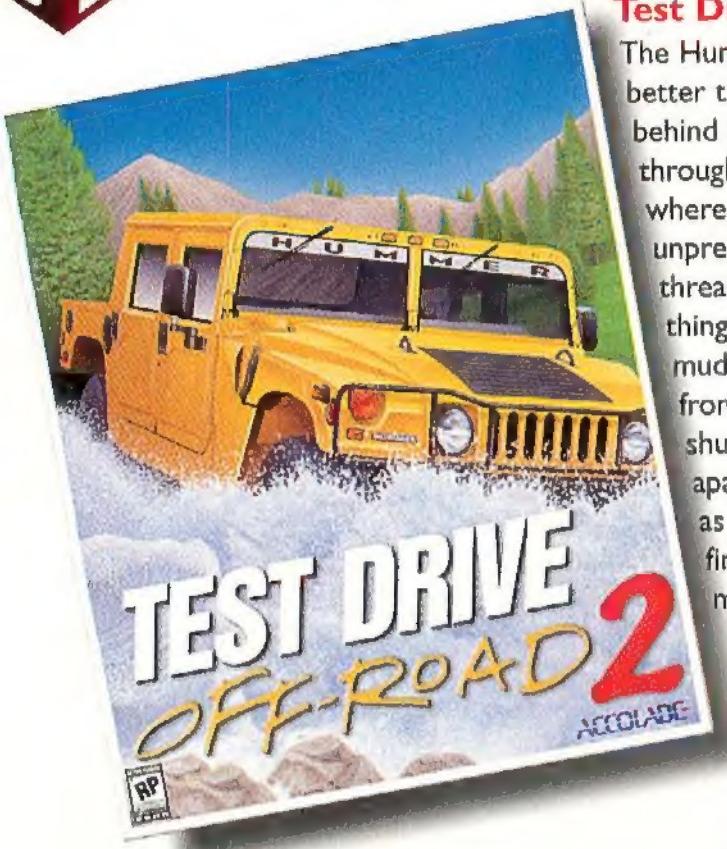


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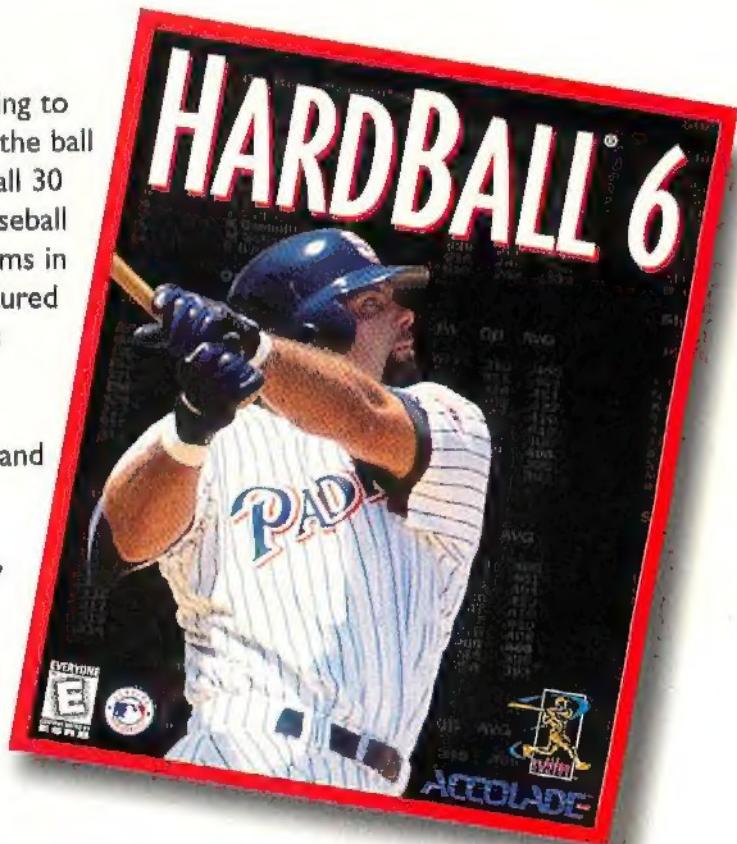
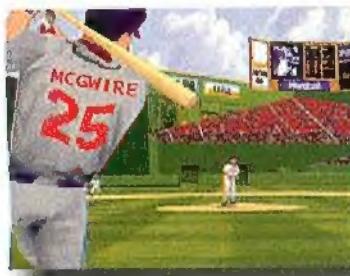
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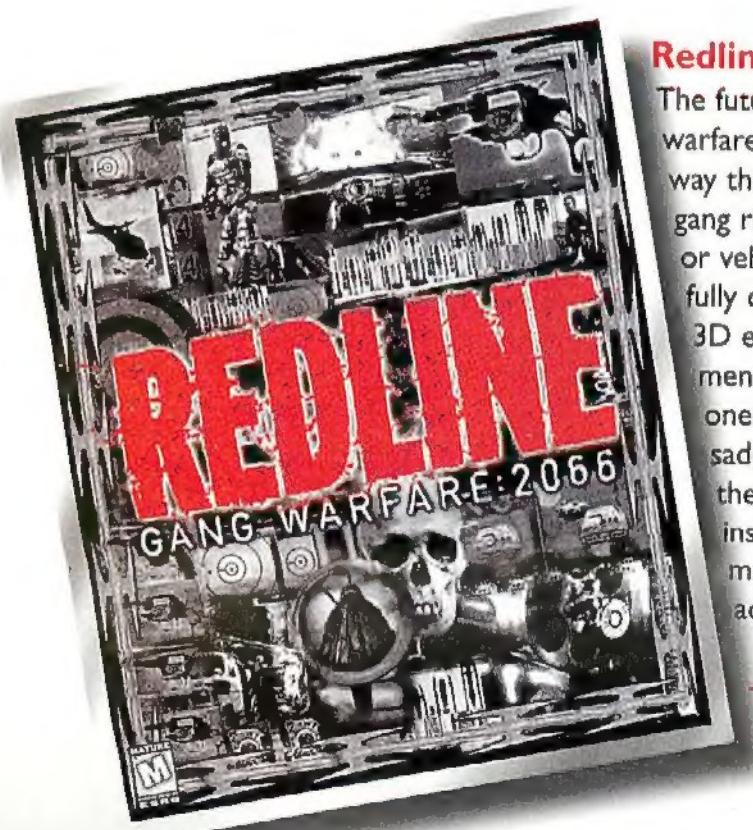
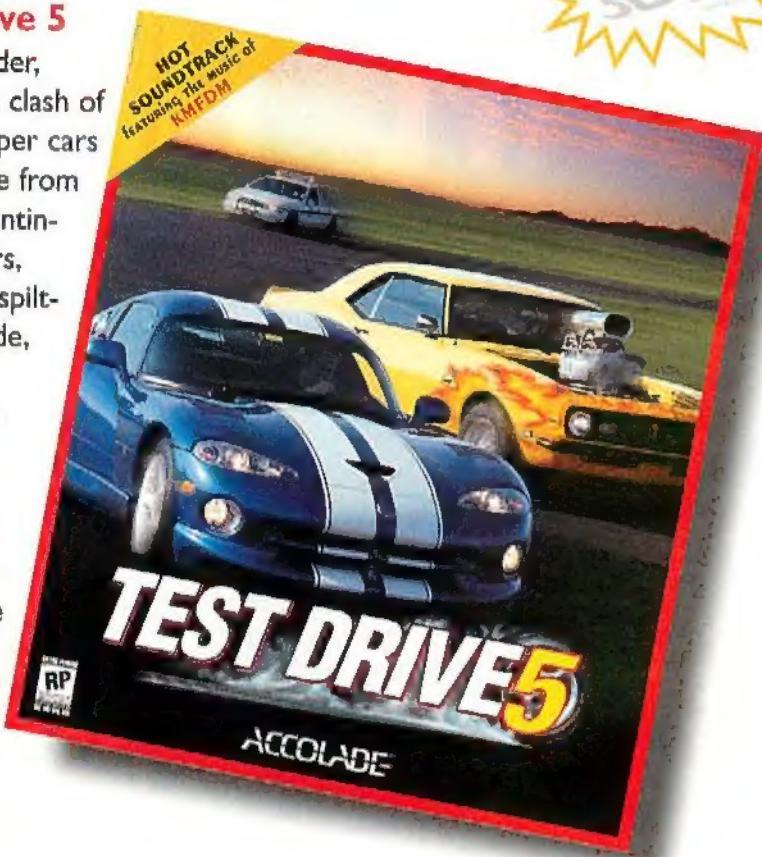
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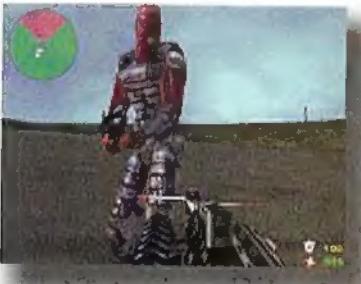
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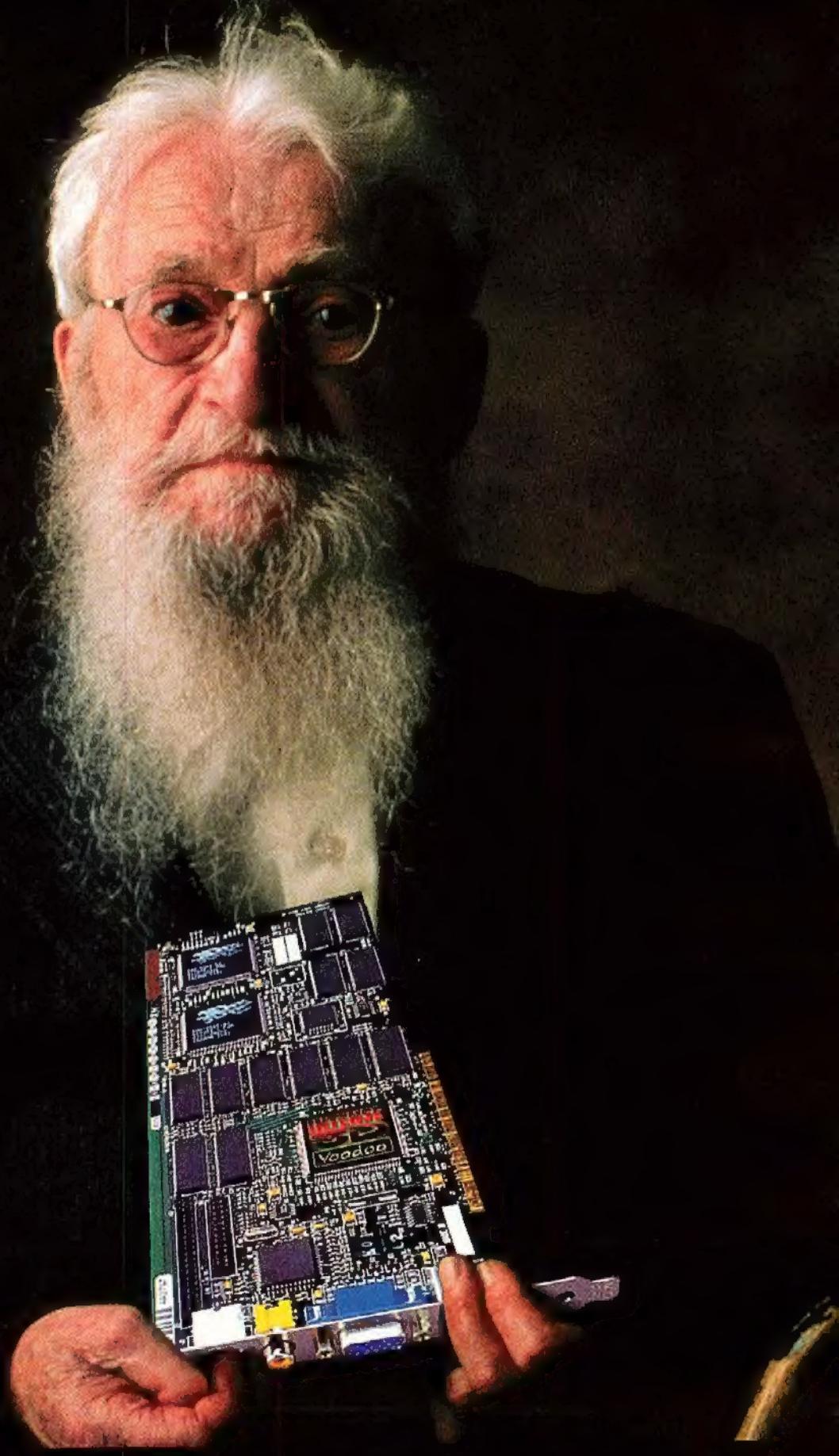


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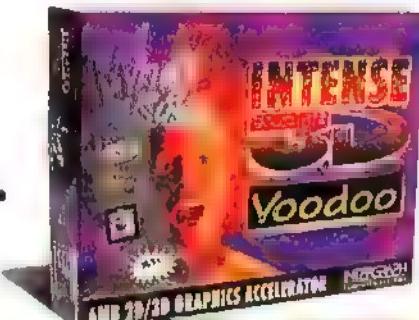
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FEATURES

100+ Hot New Games

Every year, we at CGW don our Nostradamus caps (we like pointy things) and attempt to unweave the tangled web of products that every PR rep in the industry assures us will "definitely ship by Christmas." After hundreds of hours of painstaking research with alphas, betas, and even more arcane builds of software, we are confident that this year's crop of hits (and a few duds, which we graciously warn you about) will ship sometime in the next six months. Really. We mean it. Would we lie to you?

Turn the page, already. 70

Windows 98

Is Windows 98 really good for gaming, or is it just more hype from Microsoft? Get the inside scoop on Win 98 from Features Editor Denny Atkin. 168

Hunting Games: The Bubba Factor

Join CGW's resident deerslayer, Joe Vallina, as he locks his sights on the hottest—and most unexpected—new game genre... 170



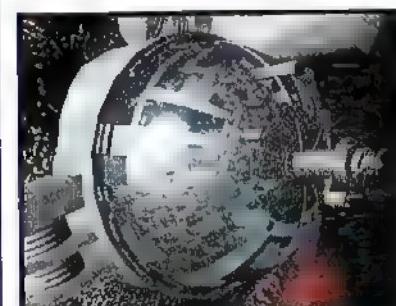
Voodoo² and You

There's a whole lotta Voodoo² goin' on, so if you want to get the best graphics card for your gaming needs, but aren't quite sure what to buy, check out Loyd Case's comprehensive Voodoo² roundup. 179

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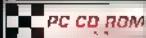
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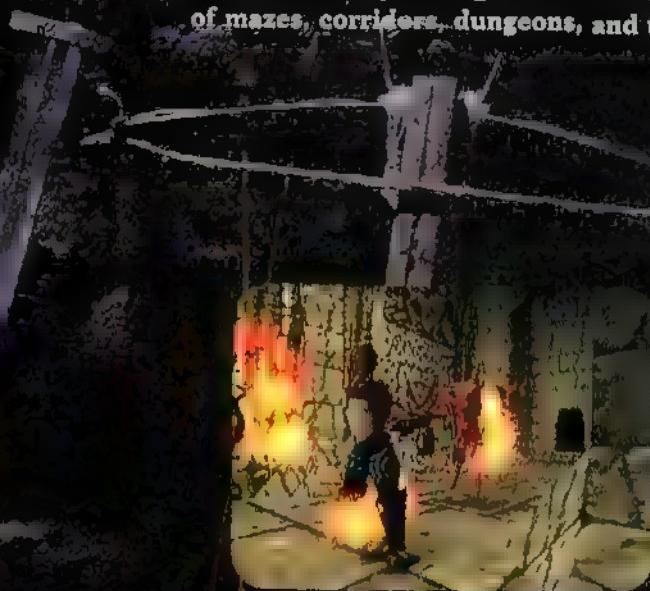
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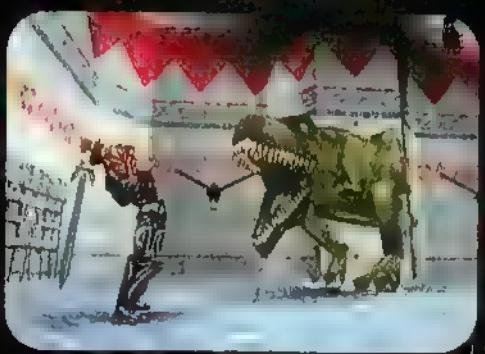
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A Lesson in Seduction

Innovation Is Nothing Without Implementation

Bing Gordon, the chief creative officer of Electronic Arts, is probably the smartest person in the interactive entertainment industry. Whenever I've seen EA make smart moves (and that's happened more often than I can remember), I've seen Bing Gordon there, either as an outspoken advocate or as the puppet master pulling the strings. He has a significantly higher batting average in this business than any other executive I can think of and, in spite of our occasional disagreements, I've probably learned more about this industry from Gordon than from any other individual.

One of my most vivid memories of a "lecture" from professor Gordon occurred at a Winter Consumer Electronics Show in Las Vegas. I was performing my typical pseudojournalistic schtick of needling Gordon about a technology that EA failed to support after the company had made a lot of PR and marketing blather about it being the "next big thing." The actual technology would only be meaningful to longtime Amiga zealots, but the lesson from Gordon will forever ring true and resonate

in my mind. He simply shrugged and said, "Hey, don't think that we [game producers] don't get seduced by technology, too!"

I remember that statement on every occasion I go to a trade show or meet with a publisher or manufacturer that has developed



ence relative recoil from firing a weapon with your force-feedback joystick? Where are the games in which you sense taking damage from the feedback in your controller? Where are the games in which you feel the controller being wrenched from you as you hit different surfaces? Where are the games in which you feel the different weights of thrust as you pull back on the throttle? In short, where are the designs to match or stretch the developer kits?

Even Microsoft's new Freestyle Pro controller, the most impressive new game controller I've seen in years, has a problem. Its problem is that it is so easy to implement

blows by moving the controller swiftly in front of the screen. It will require real design innovation to match the potential excellence of this controller.

At the 1998 Computer Game Developers Conference, I experienced an amazing new technology that fed electric impulses into my inner ear through my earlobe. You could dial the sensation up or down according to your personal sensitivity. It was a very fascinating experience and I can see it working well in games. However, such a technology would require a visionary producer/designer to see that the process worked throughout the game. Otherwise, it won't use the

We've been seduced by the technology, but we were hoping for a relationship.

some cool new technology. The fact is, technological innovation doesn't mean squat until it's united with design innovation.

Like the often prescient Mr. Gordon, we in the gaming community have been briefly seduced by technology, but we were hoping for a relationship. Where are the games in which you experi-

by using the joystick drivers that no game producers may bother taking advantage of its unique ability to read the physical 3D position of the controller. No one may bother experimenting with a swashbuckling game in which you really move your hand in the air to fence with the cardinal's guard. No one may allow you to parry

technology enough and gamers will just turn it off, just as many turn off their force-feedback controllers.

The same principle applies to thunder seats, VR goggles, and gimbals, which give gamers the sense of being in a vehicle from the vibrations of the subwoofer under their seats and the sensation of flight from literal movement of their game chairs. All of these exotic peripherals can add to the gaming experience, but they'll do so only if the design community figures out ways to give gamers the "Ah, ha! I never knew it could be like that!" experience.

Above all, let's remember the essence of what Bing Gordon was trying to tell me on that day. Technology by itself has no soul. It is only when it is implemented well in actual games that we begin to be excited by its potential and experience a satisfying relationship—instead of a brief seduction. I think it's one of the most important lessons I've ever learned. **CGW**



BING, GOES THE STRINGS! At the 1998 Winter Consumer Electronics Show in Las Vegas, Electronic Arts Executive Vice President Bing Gordon (left) demonstrates a game to CGW founder Russell Sipe. During this session, Gordon stated that "We are seduced by technology, too!"

Upon further reflection,



"DragonFire will raise the bar for RPG
adventure games." — GameCenter

"Sierra pulled out all the stops for this
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LETTERS

Dead Web?

How come you have allowed the *Computer Gaming World* Web site to die? It hasn't been updated in almost a month. I am sorry to see it go. I visited it almost daily, and am hoping you will start refreshing it again soon.

—Ron Raducanu
via the Internet

Good question. We've been wondering the same thing. Ziff-Davis has chosen GameSpot to be CGW's online provider, and we're currently working out a design with them. Actually, by the time you read this, we should have a new home page with cool new features, such as downloadable demos and up-to-the-minute news. Best of all, the URL remains www.

computergaming.com. We apologize for the delay, but with GameSpot's reputation as the leading source for gaming on the Web, you'll be in good hands.

Columnapping

I hear tell that there will no longer be columns in CGW. Huh?

—Jonathan Baron
via the Internet

During the summer months, as we pasty-faced gamers don our shades and venture out to the beach in an effort to get enough of a tan to last us through long winter months of STARCRAFT and QUAKE II DeathMatches, the magazine inevitably gets smaller. Not wanting to sacrifice the length and quality of our reviews or strategy features, we put a number of columns on summer hiatus. The good news is that you'll see the return of the most popular columns in a new format in next month's issue. Watch for them!

Army Men

I recently graduated from the U.S. Army's Command and General Staff College in Ft. Leavenworth, Kansas. During my third, and final,

term, I participated in an experimental course here called Military History Through Simulations. As a longtime wargamer I probably do not have to tell you how excited I was about the course. Having been in the Army for more than 14 years, I could never understand why my profession did not make use of all the wonderful military simulations that were available in the commercial market. The simulations we played, evaluated, and then wrote about were all historical battles.

As you might suspect, most of those in the course (including the instructor) were old gamers like myself. From the V FOR VICTORY series to SID MEIER'S GETTYSBURG, we evaluated the simulations on their ability to re-create as accurately as possible our understanding of actual battlefield conditions.

So what does this have to do with your magazine? Not much, I guess, except that from time to time I pick up a copy to learn about



the latest in military simulations. I particularly enjoy your annual wargame blowout, and your reviews help me separate the "wheat from the chaff" (or something like that). Anyway, just wanted to write and let you know that your Army has not completely overlooked military simulations as a tool for our professional development, and many of us eagerly await each new military simulation that hits the market. Keep up the good work!

—Peter A. Martinson
Major, United States Army

Sweet Release

As the release date nears, anticipation sets in and I find myself constantly calling up Best-Buy and checking the Internet to see if the game has made it to the shelves. After hearing the news of UNREAL's release I quickly head off to the store, pick up the box, scream cries of thanks to God Almighty, and then I check the infamous system requirements on the bottom of the box. The label says Intel Pentium 200 MMX recommended. That isn't a problem, I have that exact processor. Next I read 32MB of RAM recommended. Thank God I opted for the 64MB DIMMS! I then see 450MB available hard-drive space. Just installed new 4.3GB hard drive, no problems there. At this point I am feeling pretty good

about myself and I wipe the sweat off my forehead. I turn the box to the back and read the Optimized for Intel MMX and 3Dfx. Yes!!!! I have it all!!!!

I go home and put the shiny disc into my 24x CD-ROM drive and listen to the spinning CD purr. I start up the game and I am dazzled by the graphics and characters. I am blowing away aliens enjoying myself as if I were Bill Gates spending money. Then I get out of my tight corridor and into an open arena. Out comes the Titan!!! As soon as he comes out, my system slows down as if my PC had "Gump" syndrome. "She can't do it, Captain!" was all I thought to myself. I read the system requirements again. Nope, I wasn't dreaming—according to the box, I met the recommended system requirements! In desperation I quickly got online and read the most recent documentation. In several places I read that UNREAL runs optimally on a Pentium II. Nooooo!!! Denied!!!! I thought I had the recommended system for running UNREAL!!!!

I write this letter in desperation that this never again happens to anyone else. Someone should make them pay! Game manufacturers should tell us, the gaming public, clearly on the box what actually runs the game well. Oh well, I guess for now I will have to replay

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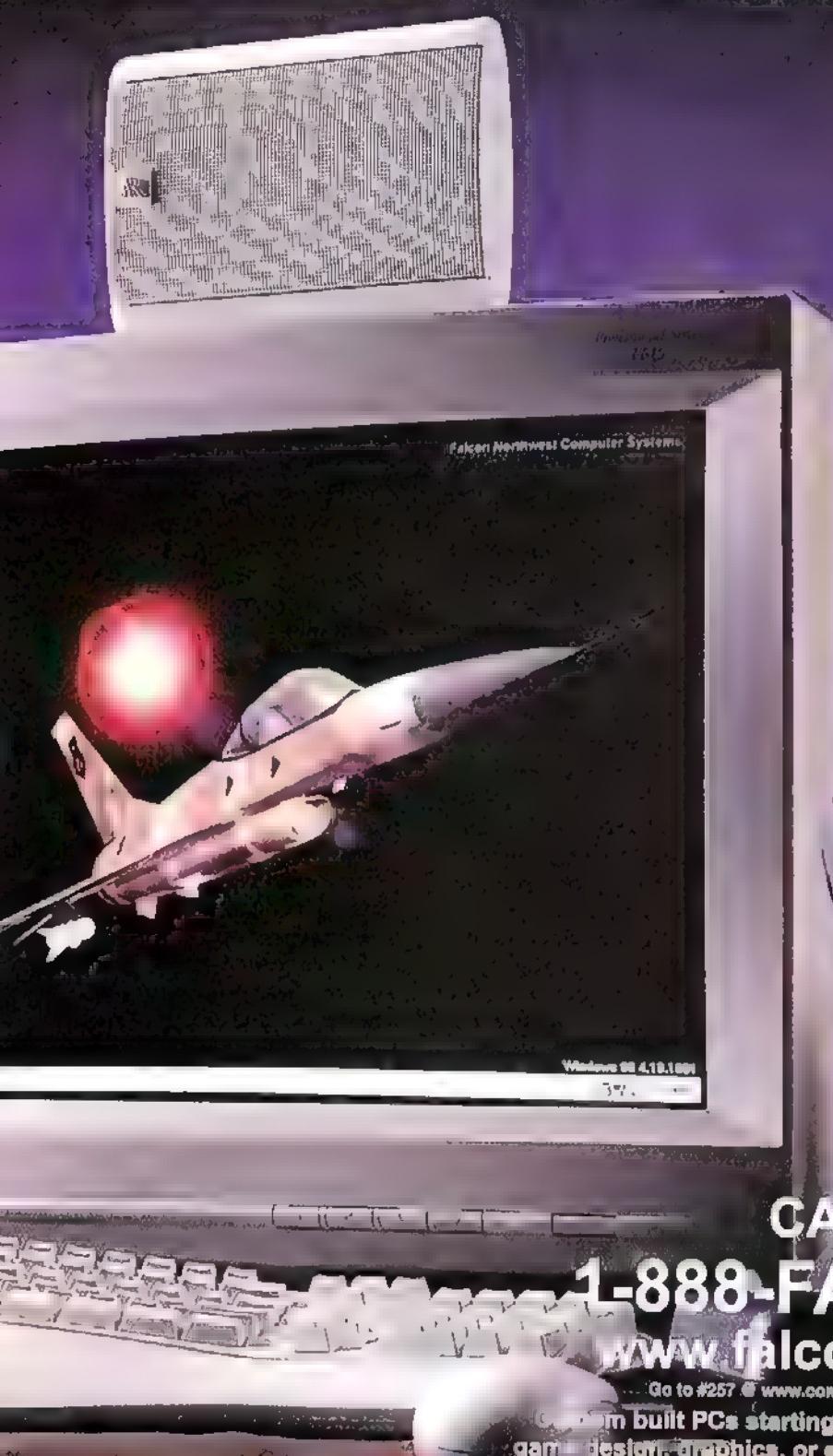
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SLOW MO UNREAL'S NO SMOOTHIE ON A Pentium 200.

games like Jedi Knight that are really good and run really well on my system.

So, LucasArts, got any new expansions planned?

—Chad Dayton
via the Internet

Unfortunately, our experience is that the so-called minimum requirements for most games spell out the horsepower you need to simply run the game. You'll almost always need at least "recommended"-level hardware to see the game running smoothly and in all its graphic glory. We've considered trying to include suggested minimum requirements with our reviews, but the problem is that "playable" is a very subjective term. For instance, Jeff Green, apparently accustomed to the slow pace of adventures, RPGs, and football, found the original release of Interstate '76 playable at 640x480 resolution on a Pentium 166. Sim-spoiled early-adopter poster-child Denny Atkin, on the other hand, found it way too jerky at that resolution, and had to drop down to 320x200. (Although Denny spanked Jeff in the game, so perhaps it's not such a subjective call after all....) If you don't want to drop a game's resolution down or deal with jerky play, make sure you have the "recommended," rather than "minimum," hardware at hand.

Which Voodoo?

I am a poor graduate student with the horrible hobby of loving computer

DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS

In our July cover story we incorrectly identified Rick Goodman as the codesigner of *Age of Empires*. He was the lead designer. We also omitted the fact that Goodman left the team after the release of the game. We apologize for the oversight.

Also, in our July review of *M1 TANK PLATOON II*, we inadvertently listed the game with a 2.5-star rating. The game should have received 3 stars, as it was listed on the reviews index. We regret the error.

entertainment. I try to keep my computer fairly well upgraded, although I am usually behind the cutting edge by about 6-8 months, for financial reasons. I have yet to purchase a 3Dfx card and am desperately wanting to. So here is the question...How long will Voodoo technology be usable? Would you recommend I save a lot of money and buy a Canopus Pure 3D LX for \$109 (a Voodoo board) or wait? I may not ever buy a Voodoo² card, I am not sure. But I have read your reviews of the Canopus Pure 3D and you guys gave it your Best Hardware of the Year award last year so you must have been impressed. Is a Voodoo card really worth it now that Voodoo² is out? If Voodoo [1] will be good for the next two years, then I might go ahead and get one, but if you think it will be obsolete in three months I'll forget it. Please write back so I can make up my mind.

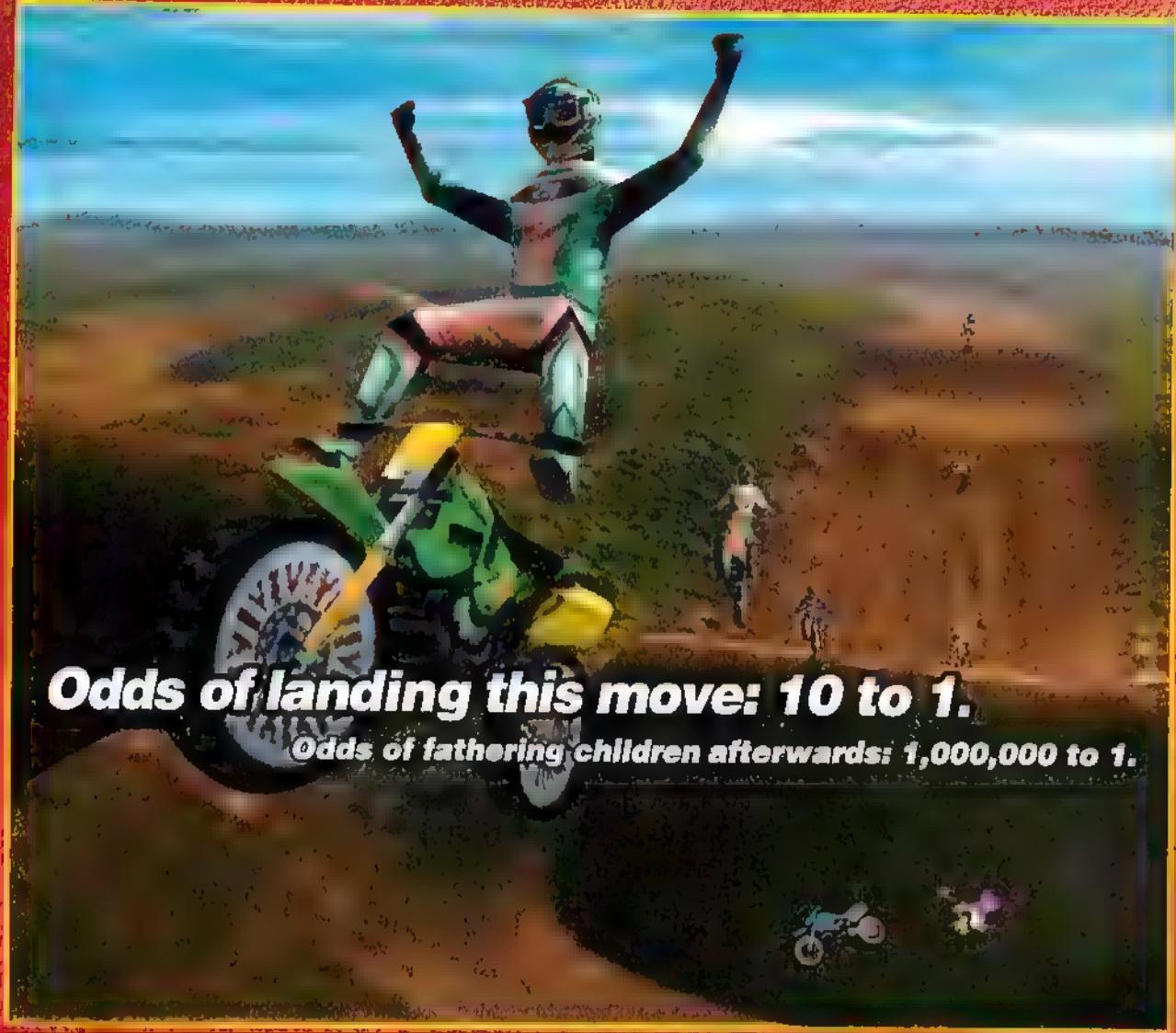
—Dave Edwards
via the Internet

While there are already graphics cards out that outperform the original Voodoo chip, that chip is far from obsolete. Given that game developers are just now finding ways to harness any of the Voodoo² features, other than higher screen resolutions, we feel that it will be early '99 before you even see games that really look all that different on Voodoo² as compared to the original Voodoo chips. Even then, because Voodoo-level technology isn't yet even considered the low-end of the gaming spectrum, you can look forward to games running well on it well into the year 2000. They'll be flashier on the Voodoo² and perhaps run in higher resolution, but the gaming experience on a card like the Pure3D LX will still be better than what you're seeing on a 2D-only or first-generation 3D card now.

Another consideration is that, unless your system has at least a Pentium II processor running at 266MHz or faster, you won't see much performance difference between a card equipped with the original Voodoo chipset and one with the Voodoo² chipset. The Voodoo² really requires a very fast processor to work its performance magic.

Matrox has just lowered the price on its M3D PowerVR PCX2 to under \$40. It doesn't support as wide a variety of software as do the 3Dfx Voodoo cards, but at that price, there's no longer any excuse not to have some 3D capability in your system.

For more detailed information regarding Voodoo vs. Voodoo², check out Loyd Case's feature on the subject, which begins on page 179. CGW



Odds of landing this move: 10 to 1.

Odds of fathering children afterwards: 1,000,000 to 1.



MOTOCROSS MADNESS

Start the madness at www.microsoft.com/games/motocross

Sick stunts and even sicker crashes. 16 get-some-serious air stunts, like the outrageous Heel Clicker and Insane Nac-Nac. Loads of notify-your-next-of-kin wipeouts. Either way you land it, you're a crowd favorite.

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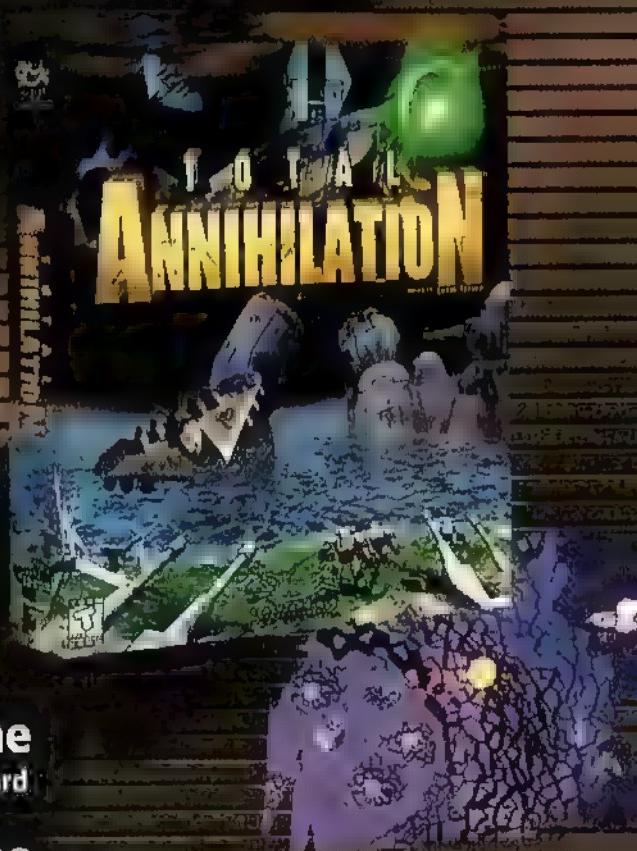


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Game of the Year

—GameSpot Editors

Game of the Year

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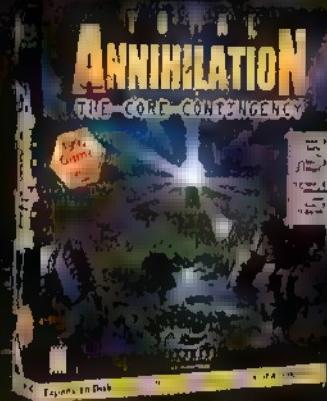
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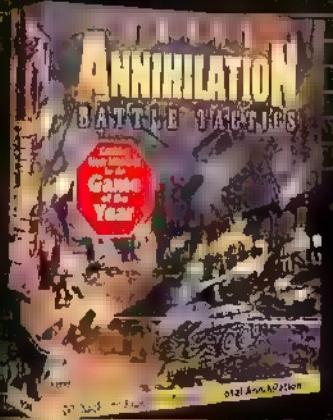
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Wasteland Paradise

Fallout 2
*Sends You on a Quest
for the Garden of Eden*

The exploits of the Vault 13 wanderer are well known to fans of Interplay's FALLOUT, but perhaps you're wondering what became of our hero, last seen walking off into the sunset? There are no documented accounts of the events following his heroic deeds. However, in the far northern wastes, a village has kept the tales of the first Vault Dweller alive. This tribal village is the home of the wanderers' descendants.

The wastelands remain harsh and unforgiving, and a decade of drought has plagued the inhabitants. The descendants are in dire need of a hero to save them from starvation. So, the task has come to you, the Chosen One, the future leader of the tribe, to save the village. Like your predecessor, you must venture into the unknown, brave dangers, and find an artifact that promises salvation: the Garden

of Eden Creation Kit. First, however, you must prove yourself worthy of tackling the challenges ahead by passing through the Cave of Trials. If you succeed, you will be given the honor of wearing your ancestor's Vault 13 suit as you embark on your quest.

For FALLOUT veterans, the interface and interaction will be familiar. The game engine remains the same with only a few cosmetic

changes. The character selection screen allows you to choose from preconfigured or customizable characters. While characters' basic attributes remain unchanged, there will be new features such as a

hand-to-hand combat skill called "flaming dragon punch." Inhabitants still walk in a zigzag pattern and can count only up to three digits when bartering. You'll still have the venerable PIPBoy 2000 at your



disposal during your travels, with its status, automaps, and archives just a click away.

Fans will also appreciate that the members of your party are no longer just pack mules and bullet fodder. In *FALLOUT 2*, they are much smarter. Not only do they use the best weapon they have, they also wear the armor you give them.

Nonetheless, watch your six. Your reputation no longer precedes you; it's alive only in the town where you earned it. Weary travelers will be happy to hear that for 2,000 bottle caps you can be the proud owner of a car. It even comes with a full tank of gas...it's just missing one rare part.

As you journey through the many new settlements, you'll discover the world has changed, but not all for the better. Sex, drugs, bigotry, organized crime, and slavery have proliferated. This new world confronts you with decisions that have dire and immediate consequences. Your refusal to help an anxious boy



retrieve his lost dog will ensure the child's death, as he runs headlong into a wooded area full of toxic waste puddles and dangerous silver geckos. The decisions get more complex, as you must weigh your responsibilities, loyalties, and morals. But in the midst of all the fighting and bickering, there are little love stories that will bring a tear to even a mutant's eye.

—Jack Rodrigues

Digital Living

Shifting From Analog to Digital Could Be Good News for Gamers

The Internet has proven to be a gale-force wind tossing around the giants of the consumer electronics, communications, computing, and entertainment industries. Those giants are now feverishly constructing

opt for "taking a home wireless" (the Holy Grail of in-home connectivity, using radio frequencies to connect all your consumer electronics)—the HPNA has a working solution very close at hand. Some refinements to the technology are being made, and a product is scheduled to ship later this year.

This presents some interesting new game design possibilities as families can stay together and play together (more easily using multiple PCs in their homes) from different rooms in the house. I'm sure the future holds another M.U.L.E. game that will do for the computer medium what *Monopoly* has done for boardgames. The days of inviting friends over to play games on your home PCs are closer at hand, and when you combine that with Net access during play, the possibilities are endless.

It was also interesting to learn that by the year 2000 there will be 5 million homes with DVD players on their TVs, but 100 million with DVD players in their PCs. This means that

Hollywood must focus its DVD content toward PC entertainment (namely, games) and not just movies.

Finally, for the ever-young, LEGO unveiled its Mindstorm Robotics Invention System. This little computer, along with a couple of motors and three sensors, gets snapped into your LEGO pieces to make programmable robots. Programming is done by simple logic modules via your PC, but the hands-on learning value of LEGO blocks (not to mention their inherent fun factor) will shoot through the roof with this product. The play and addiction value of a LEGO robot is so high, I predict we'll all be taking a turn rolling around on the floor getting our blocks off. —Alan Emrich

alliances like shelters lest they be destroyed by the nature of this force. At the Digital Living Room—a conference convened by *Upside* magazine to explore how the consumer experience will change as the world shifts from analog to digital—it was clear that the media convergence creating the high-tech home of the 21st century will have a definite impact upon gaming

The Home Phoneline Networking Alliance (HPNA) is the very real first step in that direction. This rapidly growing consortium of communications giants (including AT&T and Lucent) announced its formation at this show. The HPNA's lofty goal is to provide simultaneous Internet access and domestic networking—with Plug-and-Play simplicity—for all of a home's PCs (15 million US homes now have more than one PC, and the number is growing rapidly) at a consumer price (about \$100 per PC for adapters). Instead of consumers having to wire their own Ethernet, however, the HPNA proposes using a home's current telephone wiring (every RJ11 jack becomes a node that moves data at about 1 Megabit/second) without affecting phone usage.

While other ideas are in the works—some folks suggest using a home's internal electrical wiring as a built-in alternative (with every plug a node); others



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Philips DVX8000 Multimedia Home Theater (PC CD-ROM and entertainment software titles included)



Celebrity Deathmatch

Battles We'd Pay to See, if the Lawyers Would Let Us

Indiana Jones

PRO: He's a rugged, rough-and-tumble, manly action man.
CON: He's getting a little long in the fedora.



Lara Croft

PRO: She's a gorgeous, no-nonsense action woman.
CON: Back problems, always wears shorts regardless of season

Winner:

Lara gets jump on Indy in Arctic, but frostbite prevents her from pulling the trigger.

Mario

PRO: Eats mysterious mushrooms and grows to enormous size.
CON: Three-pixel plumber's crack can be a distraction.



The Avatar

PRO: Virtuous, strong (did we say boring?) and can feed himself in later versions of game.
CON: Can't even beat the Guardian in his own game, so how's he gonna win here?

Winner:

Mario bounces from platform to platform with ease, while Avatar drowns in first creek.

Derek Smart

PRO: The most brilliant, innovative, creative, and modest game designer in the history of the hobby.
CON: Doesn't take criticism that well.



The Coke Machine

PRO: Can take a lickin' and keep on servin' cold ones.
CON: Passive-aggressive method leads to long, boring fights.

Winner:

(*The Rematch*)
Jury still out—
Derek promises victory as soon as BATTLECRUISER 4000 0 423 ships.

Luke Skywalker

PRO: Good pilot, can bring down tall Empire AT-ATs with a swipe of his lightsaber.
CON: Whiny and hot-tempered; has weakness for Ewoks.



Colonel Blair

PRO: Best pilot in Confed history; many years of experience.
CON: Ready for Galactic Social Security, we liked the blue hair better.

Winner:

Mark Hamill gives up after a few rounds and takes himself out for a beer.

Darth Vader

PRO: Dark Side Force Master; cool suit, great voice.
CON: Horrid asthma problem.



Putt Putt

PRO: Always happy; has killer sidekick, Pep the dog.
CON: Has no nose; sometimes runs out of gas.

Winner:

Cornered at zoo by Putt Putt and Pep, Vader is goaded into embolism.

Johnny Wilson

PRO: Can talk on virtually any subject.
CON: Does talk on virtually any subject.



Richard Garriott (Lord British)

PRO: Has medieval act down pat—great hairdo, too.
CON: Too many frilly shirts, been a while since last big hit.

Winner:

Wilson challenges Garriott to a M.U.L.E. showdown, but game won't run on Garriott's P-II 400. It's a tie.

The Death of Ultima IX

Former Team Member Tells All

Computer Gaming World talked to Mike McShaffry, former Project Director for **ULTIMA: PAGAN**, about the shift from the promised **ULTIMA IX**, which Origin professed would return to the **ULTIMA** tradition, and its current incarnation as **ULTIMA: ASCENSION**. —Johnny Wilson



CGW: People who don't know you might wonder why you're going on the record about the changes in **ULTIMA**. Can you start by explaining how you came to be involved with the **ULTIMA** series?

Mike McShaffry: I started playing **ULTIMA** on the old Apple II. It was the most complex and amazing game in existence. I always eagerly awaited the next **ULTIMA** in the series because each new **ULTIMA** completely shattered the old barriers of immersion and realism in a fantasy RPG. It's true that god was in the details—flags waving in the breeze, mind-numbing moral messages and dilemmas, and a game system that let you think instead of guess. It's safe to say that I was a hard-core **ULTIMA** player.

About the time that Origin released **ULTIMA VI: THE FALSE PROPHET** (which I pre-ordered, to get that special version signed by Lord British himself!), I was offered the job (at Origin); it was like a dream come true. After all, it was **ULTIMA** that really captured my interest in computing and motivated me to go to college and get my B.S. in Computer Science. That was October 1990.

So, what did you do at Origin?

My first project was **MARTIAN DREAMS**, an **ULTIMA VI** spin-off pro-



duced by Warren Spector. I was a grunt programmer...the guy that let you dig holes in the Martian soil and push those cool mine carts around. Next, I was "lent" to the

ULTIMA VII team for what was supposed to be six weeks. Well, I never made it back! On **ULTIMA VII**, I handled a lot of user interface tasks, using a system called

Gumps. After **ULTIMA VII**, I was promoted to Project

Director, and got my first lead position on **ULTIMA VIII**. In addition to programming I managed the tactical needs of the project on a day to day basis. I was

responsible for getting Origin to allocate some time and budget to create the **ULTIMA VIII** patch, as well as the programming on the patch itself. We learned that managing an **ULTIMA** is just too big a job for one person to handle, so we created a management team on **ULTIMA IX**.

Could you explain exactly what happened to **ULTIMA IX? We printed a story some time**

ago about how Lord British and Warren Spector were going to get back to the core-**ULTIMA**. What happened with that?

It was pretty obvious after Origin released **ULTIMA VIII: PAGAN** that the game design wasn't making the die-hard **ULTIMA** fans happy. Richard Garriott and others at Origin knew that **ULTIMA** sales weren't accelerating as fast as the rest of the market; so certain changes were made in the design of **ULTIMA VIII** to interest more than [just] hard-core **ULTIMA** fans. That's why the story took place away from Britannia, the



scope of the game was drastically reduced, and the puzzles were more like what you'd expect in a game like **PRINCE OF PERSIA**. Needless to say, when the game was originally released there was a lot of negative feedback. Right after the release, Origin's customer service department compiled a list of complaints. It weighed about 10 pounds! The

Continued on page 294

"As for **ULTIMA IX,** Lord British observed that, as is traditional with their flagship series, the technology is being built from scratch. Yet, the feel of the game will be much more akin to **ULTIMA IV** through **VI**. As the third installment of the third **ULTIMA** trilogy (**I-II, IV-VI, VII-IX**), **ULTIMA IX** is intended to be the epic of all epics—completing the Guardian trilogy of **VII, VIII** and **IX** once and for all. Explained Lord British, "We also reach back to **ULTIMA IV** and resolve the relationship between the Avatar and the Guardian. And as long as we were reaching back to **ULTIMA IV**, we decided to reach all the way back to **ULTIMA I** and to Mawdain and his magic gem and tie up everything back to the beginnings of Britannia."

*—Taken from an article in the October 1995 issue of CGW (Issue #135, READ.ME, page 24), in which Richard Garriott discusses the direction he plans to take with **ULTIMA IX**.*

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Age of Empires II Microsoft	Q1 '99
Alien vs. Predator Fox Interactive	Q4 '98
Asherom's Call Turbine/Microsoft	Q4 '98
Battleground: Chickamauga TalonSoft	Q4 '98
Bottle of Writin' TalonSoft	Q4 '98
Birth of the Federation MicroProse	Q4 '98
Blackstone Chronicles LegendSS	Q4 '98
C&C: Tiberian Sun Westwood	Q4 '98
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Daikatana Ion Storm/Eidos	Q1 '99
Dark Vengeance GT Interactive	Q4 '98
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Ultra Fighters Interactive Magic	Q4 '98
Wheel of Time Legend/GT Interactive	Q2 '99
Wings of Destiny Psynosis	Q1 '99
WWII Fighters Jane's EA	Q4 '98
You Don't Know Jack 4 Barley	Q4 '98

Quake III Is Dead

John Carmack announced recently that *QUAKE III* is dead. Instead, **id Software** is working on a new project that will be called *QUAKE ARENA*.

According to Carmack, the new game will consist exclusively of DeathMatch-style gaming. The single-player game will be a progression through a ranking ladder against bot AIs. The change came about because Carmack felt that **id** had been designing two games at once—the single-player game and the multiplayer game—with often conflicting goals. Choosing not to focus on the single-player game will allow **id** to make significant advances to the multiplayer experience.

The graphics engine will still be OpenGL-only, with significant new features not seen anywhere before, but it will also have fallback modes to render at roughly *QUAKE II* quality and speed. The game is still on track for an end-of-year release.

Duke Gets Unreal

According to a recent announcement from **3D Realms**, the upcoming *DUKE NUKEM FOREVER* will now be built around **Epic Mega-Games'** *UNREAL* engine. The game had been originally built around **id**'s *QUAKE II* engine.

DUKE NUKEM FOREVER project leader George Broussard says the team realized that the direction they wanted to go could be better achieved with the *UNREAL* engine. Broussard is confident that the game data will transfer easily to the new engine, and he expects the transition will set the team back only about a month to six weeks. The game is scheduled for a Q1 '99 release.

SouthPeak Goes Looney Tunes

SouthPeak Interactive has entered into an agreement with **Warner Bros.** to become the chief developer of family entertainment CD-ROMs featuring *Looney Tunes*, *Pinky and the Brain*, and the *Animaniacs*.

The 1998 games lineup will include a multiplayer, arcade-style strategy game tentatively

requested features straight from drag-racing fans.

Novalogic Releases Three Games in One

Novalogic recently released *WORLD OF COMBAT 2000*, a military sim compilation that includes the helicopter sim *COMANCHE*, the flight sim *F-22 LIGHTENING II*, and the tank sim *ARMORED FIST 2*, all for the price of one product.

Also in the works at Novalogic is *DELTA FORCE*, a commando-style action game, based on the activities of the U.S. Army's top secret special forces unit. The most impressive feature of *DELTA FORCE* is that gamers can see and engage the enemy beyond the 75-pace viewing limitations typical of this kind of game. *DELTA FORCE* can be played from both a first- and third-person perspective, and will include large-scale multiplayer capabilities via *Novaworld*, Novalogic's free online gaming site. The game is slated for a fall release. Look for a full sneak preview in next month's issue of *CGW*.

SHRA Burns Rubber Online

The **Simulated Hot Rod Association** (SHRA) recently held its inaugural online drag-racing event, the *Kali/ThrustMaster Open Bracket Challenge*. The SHRA was created for users of **Bethesda Softworks'** *BURNOUT: CHAMPIONSHIP DRAG RACING*. The pre-season events offered prizes of more than \$5,000, and, according to SHRA founder Tim McArthur, the official season will offer bigger events and better prizes. For more information on SHRA, head to www.shra.com.

In related news, Bethesda plans a September release for *BURNOUT: CHAMPIONSHIP DRAG RACING PLAYER'S CHOICE EDITION*, featuring the top 10 most-

ThrustMaster Reduces Work Force by 30 Percent

In an attempt to improve profitability and increase the value of its stock, controller giant **ThrustMaster** recently cut 30 percent of its work force. With only 90 remaining employees, ThrustMaster hopes to position itself for higher profitability.

Although first- and second-quarter revenues were lower than expected, ThrustMaster CEO Stephen Aanderud said, "[the company] is confident that our introduction of new products for 1998 will be successful and position the company for a strong fourth-quarter holiday selling season and beyond."

24 NEW WAYS TO TELL YOUR FRIENDS HOW MUCH YOU LOVE THEM.

QUAKE II MISSION PACK



NEW ENEMIES

GET READY TO FACE THE TOUGHEST HORDE OF STROGGS STRAIGHT FROM THE NIO-VATI'S. THE STALKER, TURRETS, DANDALUS, MEDIC COMMANDER, CARRIER AND THE QUAKR BITCH HERSelf, THE BLACK WIDOW.



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ACTIVISION

Beat Me Again

DUNGEON KEEPER II Offers Improved Graphics, More Creatures, and Better Ways to Torture

Though DUNGEON KEEPER was an excellent game, there was some room for improvement, and the expansion pack, DEEPER DUNGEONS, did little more than provide new levels. In the current wave of sequelitis, the concept of the game as an evolutionary beast is becoming more and more acceptable. With that in mind, DUNGEON KEEPER II looks as if it will be the title we all wished the first one could have been. The pixelated sprites that were used for the creatures have been replaced by polygons within a full 3D world, and the overall look is much more polished as a result.

While Bullfrog has managed to maintain the sinister atmosphere, the dungeons themselves are now brighter and clearer; this is most noticeable when you play from the first-person view. The water and lava

are also noticeable: They now clearly move and have

mass and force—you can flood caverns and watch both heroes and minions get washed (or burned) away.

Creatures are now designed within their own spatial area so that they won't cross through each other. This will allow single creatures to block narrow passages, delaying the advance of larger numbers of foes. The game has 20 levels and 17 new characters, including Rats and Salamanders. You can now punch and slap to maintain discipline, and your methods of torture have also been improved. In addition to torturing creatures conventionally in the chamber, you can look forward to manually pulling off their limbs.

DUNGEON KEEPER II will include LAN and Internet multi-play and will support 3D acceleration. Look for a full sneak preview in an upcoming issue of CGW. —Alan Dykes



Dungeon Sketch



Temple Sketch



Playing Lately

CGW Survey

- | | Last Month | Months on Chart |
|--|------------|-----------------|
| 1. StarCraft (Blizzard/CUC) | 1 | 1 |
| 2. Quake II (id Software/Activision) | 4 | 4 |
| 3. Age of Empires (Microsoft) | 1 | 1 |
| 4. Might & Magic VI (3DO) | 1 | 1 |
| 5. Total Annihilation (Cavedog/GT) | 1 | 1 |
| 6. Panzer General II (SSI) | 1 | 1 |
| 7. Diablo (Blizzard/CUC) | 1 | 1 |
| 8. Jedi Knight (LucasArts) | 1 | 1 |
| 9. Heroes II: P.O.L. (New World Computing) | 1 | 1 |
| 10. Wing Commander Prophecy (Origin/EA) | 1 | 1 |

This list indicates what the top 100 games in the CGW survey were last month. We mail a survey to 1,500 randomly chosen subscribers each month. The survey asks them to indicate what games readers are playing the most time on. An additional column indicates what games readers are playing the most time on, giving the readers' overall "quality ranking" in the Top 100.

PC Data Best-sellers **

- | | Last Month |
|---|------------|
| 1. StarCraft (Blizzard/Cendent Software) | 1 |
| 2. Unreal (GT Interactive) | 1 |
| 3. Deer Hunter (GT Interactive) | 1 |
| 4. Titanic: Adventure Out of Time (Cyberflix) | 1 |
| 5. Myst (RedOrb) | 1 |
| 6. Might & Magic VI (3DO) | 1 |
| 7. Cabela's Big Game Hunter (Head Games) | 1 |
| 8. Army Men (3DO) | 1 |
| 9. Rebellion (LucasArts) | 1 |
| 10. Flight Simulator '98 (Microsoft) | 1 |

This list indicates what the top-selling PC games were, as calculated by PC Data, for May, 1998.

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III

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OMIKRON
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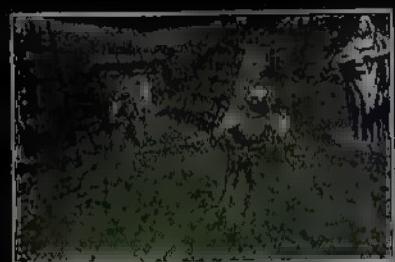
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Others, to seek the fellowship
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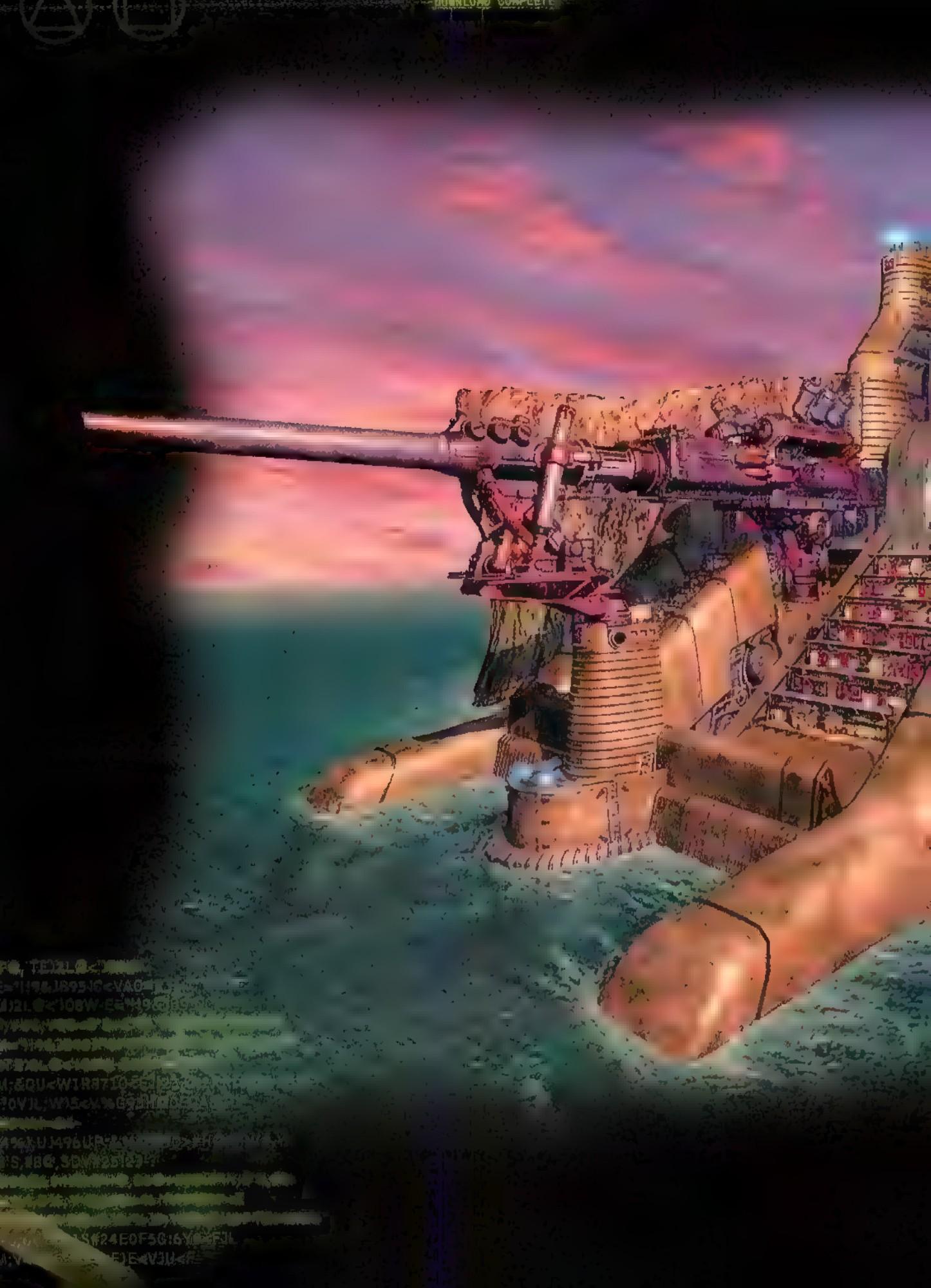
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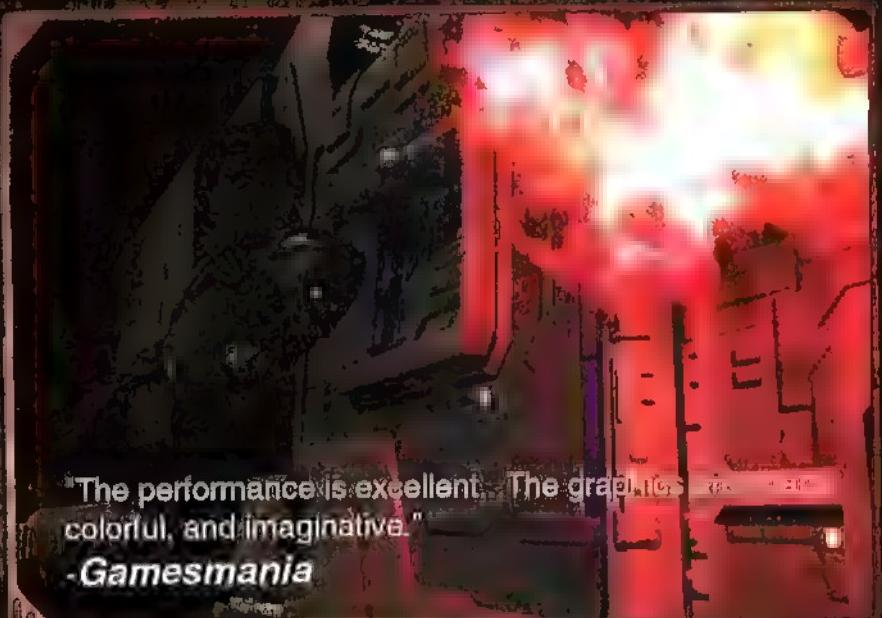
YOU'VE BEEN WARNED.



TOMB RAIDER

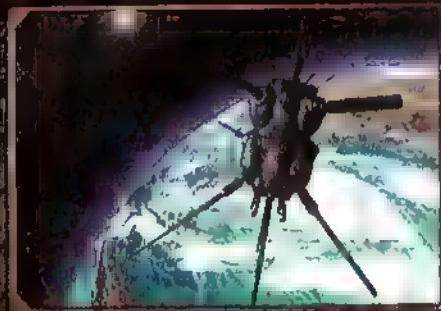
ADVENTURES OF
LARA CROFT

III



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A TODD PORTER GAME

Rising Higher

SSG and Red Orb Add New Features to Their 5-Star Game

SSG's classic and popular WARLORDS series will soon give rise to another addition, WARLORDS III:

DARKLORDS RISING. This new game is essentially WARLORDS III+, in that you get the original, 5-star WARLORDS III game with a host of additions and general improvements. It's the perfect pack for the WARLORDS rookie, while still promising enough new features to capture the interest of hard-core WARLORDS III fans.

In the Works

DARKLORDS RISING adds 30 new armies, 5 new Hero types, 6 new abilities, and 15 new spells. Each unit, ranging from the numerous, but weak, Giant Bees to the powerful Silver Dragon will have entirely new art for both the portrait and the tile. The new Hero types (Summoner, Alchemist, Monk, Bard, and Barbarian) will also use some of the new spells, abilities, and artwork.

DARKLORDS RISING will also include seven new game types and victory conditions, including the popular "Capture the Flag" game and the "Instant Chaos" victory, in which everyone starts off clustered in the middle of the map. Add to this a host of new scenarios, maps, and entire campaigns, and the shelf life of this game is sure to grow.

Finally, DARKLORDS RISING will ship with both a scenario builder, to create your own maps and scenarios, and a campaign builder that will let you string scenarios together. So if you get bored with the multitude of scenarios bundled in this release,



YOU CAST A SPELL ON ME While the new hero portraits are a big step up from WARLORDS III, this hot sorceress might warrant a PG-13 rating.

you can just make your own; you can even edit the stats for the heroes, magical items, and army units. All in all, if SSG keeps on track, this "gold edition" of WARLORDS III should be a good buy for WARLORDS fans everywhere. It should be available by the time you read this. —Thierry Nguyen

WELCOME TO MY NIGHTMARE
Undead hordes, a WARLORDS fixture, are even more of a treat in DARKLORDS RISING due to the new, nastier unit types.



Player Stats

Top 10 Best-Selling Games, 1993 – Present*

	Game	Company	# Sold	Net Revenue
①	Myst	Broderbund	3,822,638	\$141,749,132
②	Microsoft Flight Simulator	Microsoft	3,637,900	\$103,656,337
③	Doom II	GT Interactive	1,815,882	\$74,785,378
④	Quake	id Software	1,620,000	\$73,184,000
⑤	Riven: The Sequel to Myst	Broderbund	1,061,226	\$46,255,705
⑥	Wolfenstein 3D	id Software	1,120,000	\$39,200,000
⑦	SimCity 2000	Electronic Arts	1,019,345	\$43,469,189
⑧	Star Wars: Dark Forces	LucasArts	928,469	\$37,199,917
⑨	Age of Empires	Microsoft	821,700	\$30,379,807

*Best-selling games, as tracked by PC Data, between January 1993 through April 1998.

a little rebellion now and then is a good thing.
Thomas Jefferson



Total command of a 8,520 ton, 150 meter Dreadnaught class Corvette.
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SNEAK PREVIEWS

YOUR BEST SOURCE FOR THE HOTTEST GAMES IN DEVELOPMENT

Sid Meier's Alpha Centauri

Eagerly Awaited Space Odyssey Makes a Real Splash Landing

by Thierry Nguyen

Although many gamers' favorite path to victory in SID MEIER'S CIVILIZATION II was to try to conquer the entire world, the ideal method was to lead your nation to the stars. After all, if you could colonize the vast reaches of space, you would build an empire that could truly stand the test of time. It is here, in the aftermath of the successful space launch from CIV II, where SID MEIER'S ALPHA CENTAURI picks up the action. Designer Brian Reynolds maintains the style of his magnum opus, CIVILIZATION II, but he and Sid Meier throw in enough twists to make ALPHA CENTAURI more than just CIV in space. From what we've played so far, it could be the most satisfying science fiction grand strategy game yet.

Setting the Galactic Stage

ALPHA CENTAURI's story goes something like this: As the United Nations colonization starship UNS *Unity* nears the Alpha Centauri system, its leader, Captain Garland, is mysteriously assassinated, and the vessel crash-lands onto a mysterious planet. The UN team selected to lead the expedition splinters into seven different factions, as each member takes a colony pod and some colonists,

and runs off to make a colony with his or her own agenda. Before starting a game, you will select which faction to lead. Of course, as with previous science-fiction games (like the MASTER OF ORION series), each faction has distinct advantages and disadvantages, and these differences greatly come into play later. The factions run the gamut from God-loving fundamentalists to militaristic zealots to nature-worshipping environmentalists.

If you played CIV II, you won't have any problem with the game mechanics. You begin with both a colony base, and Formers (a space version of CIV II's settler unit) to explore the land and perform a variety of terraforming tasks to the alien landscape. Meanwhile, you will manage your colony's growth, research new discoveries, and build machines to expand and enforce said expansions militarily. And finally, you will run into the various factions that have set up shop on the planet, and wheel and deal through the exchange of treaties, technologies, and, occasionally, blows between you and them.

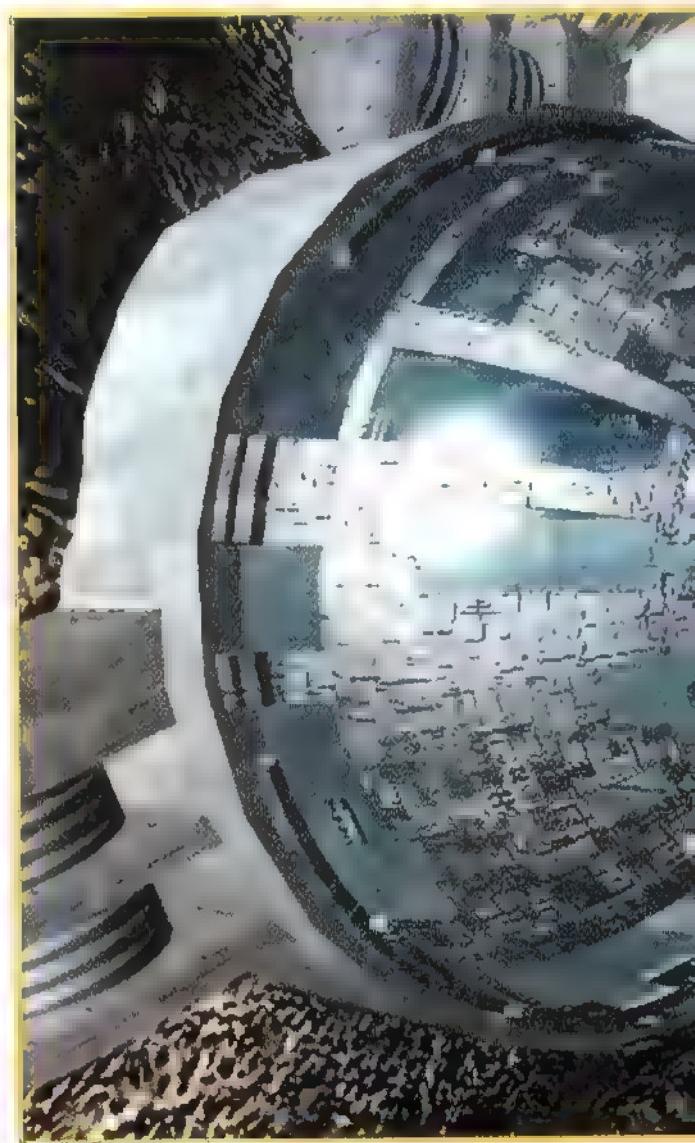
However, in keeping with the science-fiction nature of the game, one of the many options that can be toggled is "Victory through Transcendence only." Thus, if you optimize your research and sociology options, you can eventually have your people evolve into the next evolutionary being—super-humans, if you will.

The Search for Intelligent Life

The actual landscape is of much more importance than in CIV II. First off, the tiles are in true

3D, so now your little Farmers, Rovers, and other vehicles can roll up and down amongst the hills, instead of simply sliding around. Terrain supplies the three necessary variables for survival: nutrients, energy, and minerals. Each tile has a visual indication of how much of each resource it supplies, and the information window in

the corner gives more details for you to decide how to develop the tile. As for the fog-of-war, you can either turn it on, and explore a black-screened landscape, or you can set it so that it shows you the preliminary information gathered from the probes sent earlier. You will get a basic layout of the land, but no idea where everyone is.



Sid Meier's Alpha Centauri

GENRE: Role-Playing
RELEASE DATE: Q4 '98
DEVELOPER: Firaxis Games
PUBLISHER: Electronic Arts

which is a nice and realistic compromise.

The various alien life forms are what make the landscape here much more interesting than that of CIV II. Although the more advanced alien species are still being fleshed out as of press time, I did get spend some time with the mysterious Xenofungus.

Xenofungus serves as both a barrier (units have a hard time moving in it), and as a breeding ground for such beasts as Mind Worms or Psi Vortices. Xenofungus also adds a defensive bonus to your units—whether this makes up for having your units trapped in it is a matter of individual taste. Xenofungus is supposed to expand and destroy structures,

and perhaps bring about life forms for further destruction. As an homage to Stanley Kubrick's classic *2001: A Space Odyssey*, you can occasionally run into a mysterious monolith that will inspire your units, giving them free upgrades of varying types. Or you'll find a wayward alien artifact for your scientists to study and thus acquire free technology.

The most science-fictional and fascinating aspect of ALPHA CENTAURI, however, is the process of terraforming. Depending on your timetable and the technology level achieved, either you can simply plant more trees imported from Earth or you can take a temperamental volcano and convert it

to an idyllic plain. As with most games from these two designers, there are consequences. If you terraform the alien landscape too vigorously, you risk being perceived as a threat by the native life forms; too cautiously, and you will fall behind your neighbors in the all-important resource and technology race.

The other factions built their colonies while closely adhering to their basic agenda, and much of their diplomatic policy is based on that agenda. For example, I was playing the Human Hive, whose destiny is closely tied to creating a police state; I encountered the Spartan Federation, representing

UNIQUE DESIGN

SHAPED CAPTURE

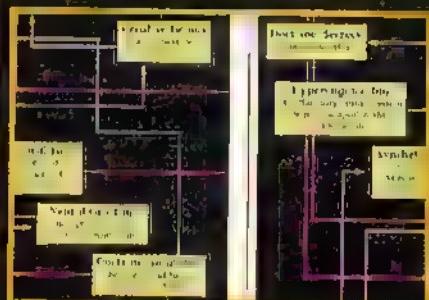
SECRET OF PLASMA STEEL
The discovery of new technologies in ALPHA CENTAURI lets you design your own units, as well as build them from a template.

BRIEF INTERLUDE We don't think Larry Niven needs to worry, but the back story of ALPHA CENTAURI (shown in vignettes such as these) helps to develop the game's hard science-fiction concepts.

My Mind Is Going

What struck me most about this build of ALPHA CENTAURI were the tech trees and the AI of the other fac-

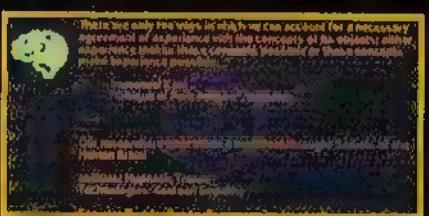
The Calculus of Ethics and Other Dilemmas



You can peruse the bewildering paths of discovery through ALPHA CENTAURI's complex flow charts (only a fraction of the possible tech paths are shown here) for the ultimate in sci-fi technogeekness.

SPARTAN FEDERATION Mission Year 2214, Budget 100			
Galaxy Financial Corp.		Galaxy Financial Corp.	
Hypnotic Mind	Advanced Hypnotic Mind	Advanced Hypnotic Mind	Advanced Hypnotic Mind
Techno-Enhanced Hypnotic Mind	Techno-Enhanced Hypnotic Mind	Techno-Enhanced Hypnotic Mind	Techno-Enhanced Hypnotic Mind
Society of the Human Brain	Techno-Enhanced Hypnotic Mind	Techno-Enhanced Hypnotic Mind	Techno-Enhanced Hypnotic Mind
Advanced Hypnotic Mind	Techno-Enhanced Hypnotic Mind	Techno-Enhanced Hypnotic Mind	Techno-Enhanced Hypnotic Mind

You can watch your various advisors argue over which technology to research (in all fairness, these guys are much more sensible than the advisors in CIV were). This is actually an easier process than in MOO II.



Once you discover a new technology, you are treated to a quote from Kant, Hegel, or even some character in the game—leave it to Meier to put things in perspective.



"...the add-on Goldeneye killer for PC." -Next Generation

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Recommunications and depot

Determine preparedness level of target



Operative is sanctioned to terminate resistance with extreme prejudice.



Intelligence gathering.

Avoid enemy contact if at all possible.



Records, ornaments, personnel.

Inflict maximum possible damage at key target areas.

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COMING FALL '98!





FAULTY TOWERS? Monoliths dotting the landscape give your units free upgrades when discovered, but they may also attract alien life forms.



CHOOSE YOUR DESTINY Factions differ in general philosophy and are given appropriate advantages and disadvantages.

the militaristic survivalists. They asked for a trade of technologies; their Nonlinear Mathematics (which yielded a powerful gun) for my Doctrine on Movement and Expansion. Essentially, it was like having NRA Extremists asking me to teach them how to drive around to "spread their views" more efficiently. I declined and instead locked an alliance with the Morgan Conglomerate, which, in the best Bill Gates manner, was rapidly cornering the free market. Another amusing anecdote was how the Peacekeeping Forces (the Humanitarian UN-descendent) kept trying to impose peaceful sanctions between warring factions.

Later on, when the factions have had full contact with each other, you can, similar to *MASTER OF ORION* (MOO), convene a Planetary Council to vote on policies and mandates that affect all factions, and to vote even for Planetary Governor. And, of course, as with CIV II, you can edit the necessary files to create your own factions with their own philosophies and applicable bonuses and tradeoffs.

ALPHA CENTAURI is a "hard" science-fiction title. Instead of employing the questionable physics of *Star Wars* or *Star Trek*, *ALPHA CENTAURI* extrapolates from current science fact and theory to determine the technologies we might investigate in the future. So, items such as

Ethical Calculus (which deeply affects the sociological structure of your faction) are found along with Superstring Theory, the Secrets of the Human Brain, and the infamous Genome Project. Every discovery is summarized with a relevant quote either taken from a real person or written by one of the faction leaders within the game.

The effects of research play out into another new feature: unit customization. No, not just editing the rules.txt file and matching it to your own .BMP as in CIV II, but where you're allowed to choose from a list of different chassis, weapons, armor, reactors, and special items to create your own units. For example, you may opt to make something sporting the biggest gun, but having the weakest armor as a consequence. Or you might just create a supermachine that will take an absurd amount of resources and time to build.

Finally, some discoveries yield options to change your society. You can make yourself a police state or a free state, or an industrial people versus an agricultural people. Other issues covered in the sociological outlook include health care and education, so you can take your debate on such topics out of current politics and see how they play out in the game. In effect, this is how you alter your faction structure during the course of the game, as each change in society will add or subtract bonuses in production, research, morale, and so forth.

Gameplay is more streamlined than in CIV II, which means you might actually finish a multiplayer game (multiplayer is still being tweaked though it will almost assuredly use a simultaneous turn system). For example, the Governor AI lets you specify how you want the computer to manage your colony—this will allow you to focus on the big picture and micromanage only as you desire.

Whether you prefer multiplayer contests or still play most of your strategy games solo, *ALPHA CENTAURI* looks extremely inviting. It retains much of the old-school depth of games such as CIV II and MOO, while adding enough enhancements to bring in more casual strategy gamers. *ALPHA CENTAURI* should be yet another big hit from Sid Meier and Brian Reynolds when it ships this fall. Then again, what else could we expect from two of the best and brightest in the business? *CGW*

SNEAK PREVIEWS



QUESTION:

There's two outs with a runner on third, count is two and two, and the game is on the line. As the pitcher winds up, you see your teammate barreling towards home and you step away from the plate. The umpire yells "Strike Three," at the same time your teammate touches home. The run scores?

TRUE
Go to Page 189

or

FALSE
Go to Page 271



I HAVE AN ENORMOUS TANK BATTALION.

I HAVE AN ARSENAL OF WEAPONS AT MY FINGERTIPS.

I'VE DESTROYED BUILDINGS IN MY WAY.

I AM ONE WITH THE CROSSHAIRS.

I AM A FORCE TO BE RECKONED WITH.

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URBAN ASSAULT

Homeworld

Relic Attempts to Launch Strategy Games Into a Bold New Direction

by Elliott Chin

HOMEWORLD, Relic's unique space strategy game, has already hit it big. Last month, we crowned it the Game of the Show in our report on E3. This month, it's the top strategy game to watch for in our fall preview feature. "Game of the Show?" "Most promising strategy game?" Those accolades don't happen every day for a project that's still in the works from an unknown start-up company. But then, it's not every day that you see a game like this. It's a game with incredible potential. Potential that Relic could parlay into the most innovative strategy game of the year.

Special Kind of Magic

HOMEWORLD's 3D universe is by far its standout feature. Alex Garden, the founder of Relic, wanted to make a game that would perfectly re-create a *Star Wars*-style battle, with fighters and cruisers swarming within a massive sphere of lasers, explosions, and ships. From the looks of the early beta we played, Garden

and Relic have succeeded in creating a fantastic engine. But what about the other things that make this game so intriguing? Well, there's the campaign, which is persistent and unconventional. And then there's the attention to detail, with extensive combat commands, context-sensitive voice help, and dynamic resources that allow for economic sabotage. It's a package that could herald a new breed of strategy game.

HOMEWORLD's campaign will feature more than 20 missions strung together with a tight story. You play a race of nomads who are returning home after centuries of wandering. Awaiting you at your homeworld is the evil race that exiled you from your planet ages ago. Along the way, you'll learn more of the story by

befriending strange traders and battling pirates, alien marauders, and the fleets of your nemesis.

The game's campaign is linear, but not fixed. There are 14 essential missions in the game, but also a dozen possible side missions that you can play or ignore. These side missions won't be necessary for completing the game, but they could offer new technologies or story information.

Basically, your hyperspace trip home comprises the "campaign," while the possible stops you make along the way are the campaign missions. Hyperspace isn't an automatic trip. Each hyperspace jump requires a set number of resource units, while maintaining hyperspace requires additional resources. Once you run out of resources, you exit hyperspace.

Then you have to harvest more resources to make another jump.

Each time you exit hyperspace, whether due to resource shortages or by your own decision, the game will randomly choose an encounter from the list of essential and side



INVISIBLE THREAT Cloaked fighters on the move.



ALL 3D, ALL THE TIME Everything in HOMEWORLD is rendered in real-time 3D, from the ships to the nebulae to the explosions.

CGW Online



Want to read more about HOMEWORLD? See GameSpot's preview at www.gamespot.com/features/homeworld.

Homeworld

GENRE: Strategy

RELEASE DATE: Q4 '98

DEVELOPER: Relic Entertainment

PUBLISHER: Sierra Studios

MOVE OUT Moving in 3D is simple. Move the destination cursor on this disc to the desired area, click to freeze the 2D location and move up or down.

missions. Once you drop out of hyperspace, the scenario begins as your ship's computer alerts you to any events that might demand your attention.

Not all the missions will be combat-oriented. At times you'll drop into the middle of a massive battle (sometimes appearing in the middle of a two-party engagement or as the sole target of a pirate ambush), but at other times, you might drop out of hyperspace to meet a tradeship arriving to sell you advanced technology. Or you might drop into a barren region of space, with sensors indicating a nearby derelict that requires exploration. These are just a few of the mission types Relic promises will be in the game.

Just as you can leave hyperspace to enter a mission, you can also leave a mission to enter hyperspace—even in the middle of a massive battle. If you are getting pounded in a scenario, you can actually flee, provided you have enough resources. Keep in mind, though, that the game will be designed so you can't just flee until you arrive at the homeworld. If you keep running away, you'll never harvest enough resources to make the jumps home. Also, because the gameworld is persistent, retreat might not be the best idea. If you flee to hyperspace before all your small ships safely dock with capital ships, you'll lose them, leaving you even more vulnerable for the next encounter.

It'll Come Back to Haunt You

The persistent universe also means that decisions you make in one scenario will affect the rest of the game. One example Relic presented involved the Galactic Storm, a cloud of violent energy that lies on the path to your homeworld. In one of the game's many cutscenes, you'll launch probes into the Storm only to see them torn to pieces. At that point, the game's ubiquitous traders will arrive and offer you an exorbitantly priced Storm Navigation Kit. If you buy

the kit, you'll be able to traverse the Storm unharmed. If you refuse or can't afford the kit, you can still go through, but you'll take a pounding and lose a number of ships.

The persistent universe bodes well for those of us who have gotten tired of having to build from scratch in every scenario of every real-time strategy game. Now, ships built in one scenario can be taken to the next. Research will also be persistent. If you start research in a scenario and then enter hyperspace, it will be completed when you exit.

The Secrets to Ship Design

HOMeworld's array of ships will be impressive. There are gunboats, interceptors, defenders, carriers, cruisers, frigates, cloaked fighters, cloak generators, research vessels, probes, long-range sensors, and floating cannons, to name but a few.

However, not all ships and technology will be immediately available to you. You'll have to research them, but not as in other RTS games. Instead of researching a ship, you'll have to research all its components before you gain access to it. Simple ships will be easy to figure out. For instance, acquiring mine-laying corvettes requires you to research mine laying. However, getting to a heavy cruiser might mean researching megaton drive, multiple gun control, increased chassis strength, and advanced targeting system.

The technology tree at your disposal is vast, but it won't always be visible. You'll see more technology as you climb



Fuel for an Empire

Like other real-time strategy games, HOMeworld requires that you harvest resources. These resources come from asteroids, gas clouds, dust clouds, and nebulae, although all gathered resources contribute to a generic pool of resource units. Yet, the original resources look and act differently.

As 3D objects, the asteroids and clouds react dynamically to what you do. When you extract resources from a cloud, it shrinks. When you mine an asteroid, it's drawn in pieces into the harvesting bay. However, you can forgo harvesting and use resources in tactical ways.

You can ionize gas and dust clouds so that they become volatile energy clouds that shoot lightning bolts at any harvester that come near. You can thus create a mine field and deprive your enemy of potential resources. Large asteroids can be broken into smaller pieces by laser fire, pounding any enemy hull that enter the newly created asteroid field. Nebulae can be harvested and charged just like clouds, but you can also hide inside their foggy mass and escape detection. The enemy will see you only if he places probes inside the nebula.

higher up the tree, but some technology might be available only from certain derelicts or trade encounters. If you go through hyperspace past those encounters, you'll miss these technologies.

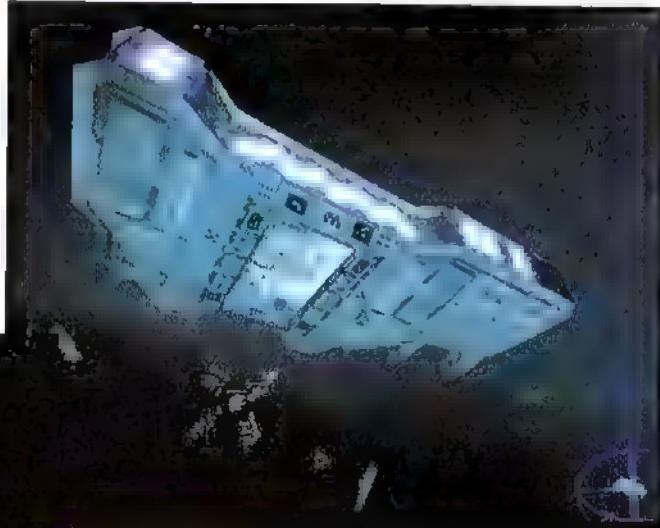
In multiplayer, research will be highly accelerated, and there will be an option to make all ships immediately available.

Battle Stations in 3D

Once you exit hyperspace and have an encounter, the real fun begins. You command ships from a

right-click menu. Every command in this menu, including attack, move, select formations and tactics, and specials (like a carrier's launch command), can also be issued with hot-keys. You can move ships via a two-click system that pulls up an overlay disc or by simply clicking on a target.

Attacking can be as simple as clicking or as advanced as selecting formations and tactics. HOMeworld's formations are similar to those in MYTH. You group ships together and then give them a



STAY IN FORMATION The Claw and Sphere are just two of the many formations you can issue to your ships. Both take advantage of the 3D space to envelop their target or their charge.

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SNEAK PREVIEWS

HOMEWORLD



NO LIMITS HOMEWORLD offers an expansive 3D environment with no physical boundaries. You can move 360 degrees in any direction to the limits of the horizon.

formation. Ships then move and attack according to formations. Several formations, such as the Claw and Sphere, take advantage of the 3D environment. The Claw formation looks like its namesake. When it encounters a target, it closes over the ship and attacks on all sides. The Sphere, by contrast, is a defensive formation that provides 360-degree protection to any ship within the sphere.

Tactics govern how your ships behave. There are three settings: evasive, aggressive, and neutral. Neutral is the normal setting, and ships in that mode will accomplish their missions as they are ordered. Ships in aggressive mode will fight to the death to accomplish their missions, even going so far as to kamikaze when situations get desperate. Ships in evasive mode will harass enemy ships and expend their fuel dodging fire (all small ships and frigates consume fuel when moving, but they can be set to auto refuel). They'll survive by evading fire, but they won't be able to accomplish their objectives because they'll be constantly fleeing.

Multiple Viewpoints

To track the battle, you can rotate your view, zoom out until your ships look like ants, or zoom in until a fighter fills the screen. You can also lock the camera to follow a ship or formation. A minimap on the screen shows friendly



and enemy ships in a limited sphere around your mothership.

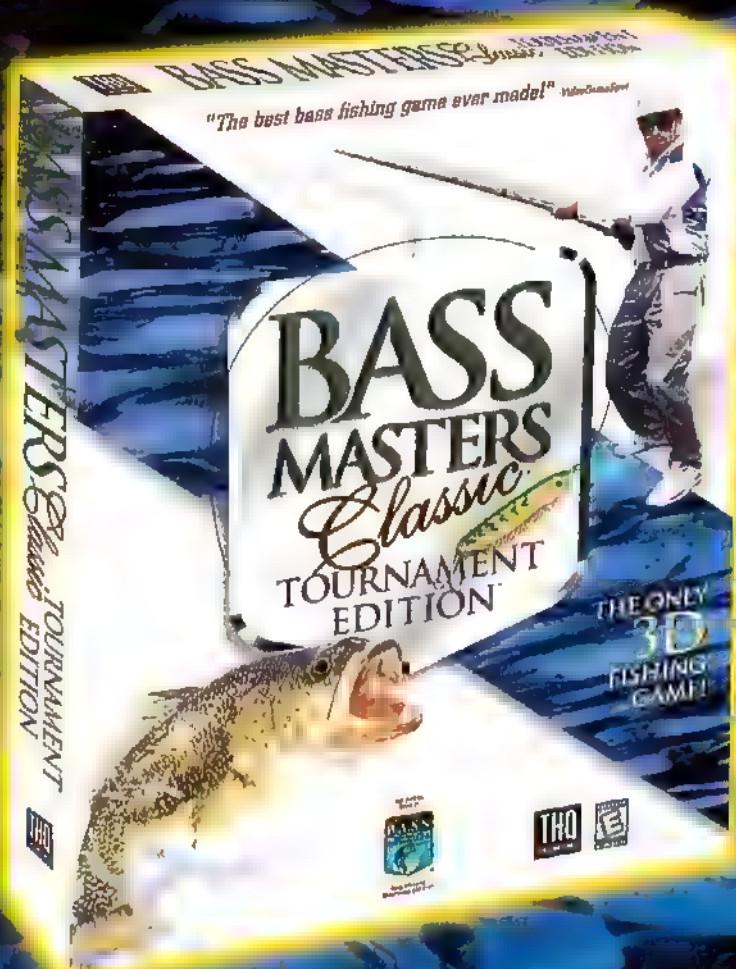
For a full view of the battlefield, you can switch views to a "Sensor Manager" that shows a full map of the scenario. All resources and ships can be seen from this view, although the map beyond your mothership will appear as unexplored fog unless you cover the area with probes. Just like the combat screen, this screen is rotatable 3D. Limited orders are possible in this screen so you can issue strategic move orders before you switch to the main view to engage in combat.

There is so much more to discuss with HOMEWORLD, but we can't fit it all in these pages (for more, read GameSpot's preview). While the game certainly sounds impressive, and the graphics are gorgeous, several questions remain about the game. The build we played was a technology demo with limited gameplay, so single-player missions and computer AI were still works in progress. Also, the unit balancing, animation, and interface still need testing. If Relic devotes the same attention to these things that it has to the 3D engine and campaign design, HOMEWORLD has a very good chance of living up to its promise. **CGW**

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Computer Gaming World's

Hot New Games

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I don't take a Nostradamus to foresee that more than half the titles covered in this year's Hot New Games won't ship until 1998.

Yet, if there is one thing that we have learned over the years, it is that you like to be in the loop in terms of the games that are coming. You want a lens trained on the future of games—and you want it now.

It has been our tradition at *Computer Gaming World* to offer in our Fall Preview a far-ranging, early-warning view of what's coming during the next year and, in December's Holiday Hot 100, to try as near as possible (with mixed results) to augur the games that will actually ship for the holiday season. In that way, you get two hot lists, a macro- and a micro-look at the state of the industry.

High-Wire Act

In this year's list of 100+ Hot New Games, we have attempted a high-wire act that may be riskier than the divining task for December's Hot Games for the Holidays list. We've looked at pre-Alpha code, Alpha code, and E3 demos and attempted to discern the top-ranked games in their particular genres. For the sake of controversy, discussion, and utility, we've given our expert opinions on the hottest games—as well as the games that seem likely to disappoint.

The good news is that we may, at times, be wrong. The better news is that this has provided an interesting exercise for us, and should, as a result, make for better reading for you. We know you'll let us know. Our fall previews have also sought, over the years, to provide some sense of trends: in technology, in design, and in

subject matter. This year's list is no exception.

Though cynics can look at 1998 as the year of "More of the Same" games, it is also true that those of us who are paid to be cynical can find evidence for that position in any year. Instead, let's focus on encouraging trends.

Role-playing Is Back

Whether or not ULTIMA: ASCENSION will be classified as a role-playing game, 1998 has already seen the release of MIGHT & MAGIC VI, a rich, big traditional RPG. Soon, we'll be confronted with WIZARDRY 8, a worthy competitor for M&M VI in the lists, which was designed by a long-time WIZARDRY player, play-tester, tech support, and documentation writer working with an experienced team. Then, we'll be challenged by SWORDS & SORCERY, designed by David Bradley, the person who designed the last three

WIZARDRY products. Finally, we'll see Raymond Feist's brilliant RETURN TO KRONDOR reach store shelves prior to the holidays. "The curse is broken! Thus sayeth CGW."

Control Factors

This year marks the release of some of the most interesting game controllers ever. Microsoft's Free-style Pro allows you to use body language to control the action on-screen, all with the familiar interface of a gamepad. You don't even have to wait for developers to figure out what to do with it. If your game supports joysticks, it supports this peripheral. Force-feed-back steering controllers are here just in time to take advantage of the great racing games coming out this season. Plus, some gamers will get a kick out of all of the seats that allow movement and provide feedback via sound vibrations. It's a wild time.

3D Positional Audio

We haven't seen the game masterpiece that uses 3DPA yet, but it is beginning to be included in games. There is nothing like hearing the monsters behind you. This type of ambient noise provides clues as to the presence of your enemies and really adds a sense of "being there."

WWII Flight-Sim Heaven

After years of neglect, we're thrilled to see the trend of World War II combat flight sims.

All of this year's crop have features to

commend them. Jane's WWII FIGHTERS, Microsoft's COMBAT AIR FLIGHT SIMULATOR, and Micro-Prose's EUROPEAN AIR WAR have marvelous looking planes, rich campaigns,

great animation, virtual cockpits, and head-to-head action for everyone. You just have to decide which one's best for you (with a little advice from us, of course).

Race Track Fever

In the past, you had to look to Papyrus for authentic, physics-based racing games in which cars could be set up to handle realistically. Papyrus will still lead the way with GRAND PRIX LEGENDS and NASCAR RACING 99, but Ubisoft (F-1 RACING) and Microsoft (CART PRECISION RACING II) will not be far behind them with the latest revs of their racing products. Newcomers such as Virgin, with its sports car simulation, GT Interactive, with its late-'60s muscle car simulation, and Intense Entertainment, with its new F-1 simulation, will round out the field. Meanwhile, those who don't like realistic sims can opt for the experience of NEWMAN-HAAS RACING from Psygnosis or games from the EA racing stable.

Small-Unit Action

Another trend is in support of small-unit actions. SPEC OPS: RANGERS LEAD THE WAY from Ripcord has realistic handling of elite troops in the real world's hot spots. Meanwhile, Tom Clancy's Red Storm Entertainment plans to do even more with RAINBOW-6 and, in the science-fiction realm, REBEL MOON REVOLUTION, from GT Interactive, is almost a small-unit strategy game instead of a shooter.

Naturally, some of the recent trends in design style are continuing. We'll still see a plethora of first-person shooters and real-time strategy games over the next 18–24 months, but it appears that they are about to become options in gaming style instead of prerequisites. We think that's healthy for gaming in the long run.

So, now that you've been indoctrinated by our quick Nostradamus impersonation, read on to discover the most exciting 100+ games currently in development.





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DRAKAN

Psynopsis
 (650) 287-6500
www.psynopsis.com
 Company ETA: Q1 '99
 CGW's ETA: Q1 '99

Of all the third-person shooters on the horizon, DRAKAN is the one that looks most promising. This is the game that is most likely to carve its place in the third-person subgenre. The reason? You get to indulge every fantasy buff's dream: You get to ride a dragon. Better yet, you get to spit fiery breath and toast goblins and ogres before you.

DRAKAN is an action-adventure game in which you play a female warrior—decked out in skimpy armor and wielding a keen blade of steel—who splits her time between riding a dragon into monster-infested skies and delving into dark dungeons and caverns. You play from a familiar third-person perspective and journey through game environments that are more

detailed and expansive than TOMB RAIDER's, with both large open spaces and claustrophobic, winding caves. Because you can literally fly across the world on the back of a dragon, you'll be able to see far into the distance and spot towns full of civilians under attack from marauding humanoids. How you choose to deal with these menaces (from afar with claw and breath or up close with sharp steel) is really up to you.

In RPG style, you'll talk to various townsfolk as you try to combat (what else) an evil threat to the realm. Once you acquire your dragon companion in the early part of the game, the rest of the world will open before you, including snowy mountains, dank swamps, sweltering deserts, and many other



environments. You'll get to ride the dragon between dungeons and increase his power as you progress through the game. You'll also acquire spells and new weapons for yourself. Psynopsis has packed incredibly detailed 3D graphics, a rich fantasy setting, and the lure of a playable dragon into DRAKAN and is banking on the game being one of its hottest titles. Read a more detailed preview in our August feature.

REQUIEM

3DO
 (650) 261-3000
www.cyclone.com
 Company's ETA: Q3 '98
 CGW's ETA: Q4 '98

Cyclone's debut title, UPRISING, was a good first effort, but its next game, REQUIEM, will blow you away. REQUIEM is literally a game of biblical proportions. You play an angel sent to a futuristic Earth to combat the evil of the Fallen Ones. Unveiled in three acts, the game plays as a fairly nonlinear action-

adventure, but features plenty of puzzles, NPCs, and quests to elevate this shooter beyond the traditional run-and-gun mind-set.

Aside from the divine storyline and more evolved gameplay, what sets this game apart from the rest of the pack are your angelic powers (think of them as pumped up Force powers, à la JEDI KNIGHT). You'll be able to possess enemies, turn them to salt, cast lightning, fly, summon plagues of locusts, and call earthquakes. There are nearly two dozen powers, and a plethora of monsters (everything

from menacing cyborgs to frightening angels) acting as your unwilling victims. In a genre crowded with too many copycats, REQUIEM distinguishes itself with a unique look and setting.



HALF-LIFE

Sierra
 (475) 649-9800
www.valve.com
 Company ETA: Q2 '98
 CGW's ETA: Q2 '98

The industry buzz touts UNREAL, HALF-LIFE, and SIN as the troika of 3D shooters that will take QUAKE-style gaming to the next level. UNREAL has beaten the other two to market, but will it be the best? Not if the Valve guys have anything to say about it.

HALF-LIFE is inching closer to release, and all the pieces are starting to come together. The latest milestone was multiplay, which was up and running at this

year's E3. Technologically, HALF-LIFE will hold its own with the best of the 3D shooters. It will sport 16- and 24-bit lighting, DSP sound, skeletal animation, and higher polygon counts on enemies. The famed AI still looks good, although recent rumors of Valve looking for a new AI programmer this late in development might not bode well for the final product. Still, the AI we saw as recently as several weeks ago was smart and organized. With integrated levels, fantastic-looking enemies, and prescribed events that present compelling narrative, HALF-LIFE is one of the brightest shooters to watch out for.



**SIN**

Activision
(310) 255-2000
www.ritual.com
Company ETA: Q3 '98
CGW's ETA: Q3 '98

We've already mentioned HALF-LIFE and UNREAL as two games that have the potential to turn the shooter genre on its head. But SIN, the last of this upcoming triumvirate, might just be the one to do it. Why? Well, the team responsible for SIN also produced SCOURGE OF ARMAGON, a paragon of brilliant level design. While SCOURGE was only a QUAKE expansion pack, the

quality of work there certainly bodes well for Ritual's SIN, which will combine DUKE NUKEM-style interactivity and level design that surpasses SCOURGE.

There are plenty of things for you to blow up in SIN, but what you destroy (or don't destroy) will affect how you navigate levels. If you don't stop an enemy from blowing up a bridge, you might have to take a detour through a new level. Sure, the level design will be great and the weapons themselves will pack some surprises, but this interactivity, which translates directly into long-term gameplay, promises to be one of SIN's most exciting features.

Expect plenty of puzzles, smart monsters, the usual assortment of 3D shooter advancements, and some raucous deathmatch levels to round out this potential blockbuster title.

**DUKE NUKEM FOREVER**

GT Interactive/3D Realms
(800) 610-4847
www.3drealms.com
Company ETA: "When it's done"
CGW's ETA: Q1 '99

DUKE NUKEM FOREVER may seem to be taking forever, but it is starting to take shape—despite the delay incurred when switching from the QUAKE II to the UNREAL engine. In addition to colored lighting and 3D architecture courtesy of the UNREAL engine, 3D Realms overhauled the code to deliver more

interactivity, true 3D fires and effects, facial expressions on characters, and even limited character interaction. What's more, Duke is starting to look like a cinematic action hero: He sprays chasing vehicles while racing down a highway à la T2, plugs jet-ski assassins 007-style as they drop from an Army helicopter, and blasts through mining tunnels on speeding railcars (tip o' the fedora to Indy).

3D Realms vows to push the boundaries again with ribald humor and risqué graphics. Some of this will arrive in the form of a leggy female sidekick named Bombshell. There might even be nudity in the game, in which case you probably won't find it at Walmart. But DNF looks so great it's bound to be a hit anyway.

ALIEN VS. PREDATOR

Fox Interactive
(310) 369-7000
www.foxinteractive.com
Company ETA: Q4 '98
CGW's ETA: Q1 '99



Fox's ALIEN VS. PREDATOR, in development for years, is finally nearing completion, and it could actually be the game Aliens and Predator fans have been waiting for.

At this point, the most stable part of the game is the multi-play. You can be an alien, a predator, or a marine, with

gameplay changing dramatically depending on your pick. The predator, with its slow but powerful weapons, can cloak itself and strike from concealment. Other gamers will see it only as a warping shimmer.

The alien will be as insidious as it is in the movies, scurrying through hallways and ducts inaccessible to other gamers. It can attack from above or below, through ceilings or floors. Its attacks are short-ranged but strong,

and its dying gout of acid can kill its attacker. The marines are at an obvious disadvantage, so they get big, nasty guns.

Single play will feature three distinct campaigns. Despite the fact that the single-player mode is running a bit behind schedule, Fox says it will still adhere to a November ship date.

INTERSTATE '82

Activision
(310) 255-2000
www.activision.com
Company ETA: Q4 '98
CGW's ETA: Q4 '98

INTERSTATE '82 is the sequel to the '70s funk-fest, INTERSTATE '76. This time around, there's vintage '80s music blasting away on your radio while you do battle with more autovigilantes and villains. The plot centers around secret skirmishes against Central American governments and presidential assassins. The game's story will take you through sewers, down into mines, to shopping malls, to Las Vegas, and onto a



secret military base (Area 49).

While gameplay will remain basically the same (ride around in vehicles and blow up stuff), there will be enhancements. You'll be able to drive motorcycles and helicopters, and get out of your car and explore some indoor environments on foot. There will be weather effects like rain, snow, and fog, as well as more detailed graphics and (we hope) faster frame rates. However, Activision is currently saying that I-82 will be a hardware-only game, so you'd better upgrade to a 3D accelerator.

There should be more complex levels (rather than simple open areas), and Activision says it will implement in-game saving. We can't wait to check this feature out. With its hip graphics look and music, and enhanced gameplay, INTERSTATE '82 could be Activision's flagship title for '98.

RP
REVIEWED BY
RICHARD POGGIO

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TRESPASSER

Dreamworks
(425) 635 7134
www.dreamworksgames.com
Company ETA: Q3 '99
CGW's ETA: Q4 '99

Dreamworks' digital sequel to *Lost World* is speeding along like a 'raptor and itching for a kill. Much has been made about TRESPASSER's physics-based engine, but it bears repeating. This game could present the most realistic environment ever in computer gaming. Every object in the game is governed by the rules of science. The way barrels float in the water, the way friction

hinders you when you push boxes, the ripples that appear in water, even the way jeeps fall down ravines and dinosaurs snap back with each bullet fired. This is a world that is as realistic as it gets.

But what about the game design? While the engine sounds fantastic, the design is still being fleshed out. For starters, this isn't a run-and-gun game. You die with one hit, so you have to sneak around and use the environment to evade and outwit dangers. The dinosaurs you face will behave realistically, as their intelligence is governed by many factors, including hunger, fear, curiosity, pain, and anger. In conjunction with the physics-based engine, these realistic dinosaurs could wind up creating a world rather than a game. And we don't think that's necessarily bad.



MESSIAH

Interplay
(949)553-6655
www.interplay.com
Company ETA: Q4 '98
CGW's ETA: Q1 '99

In Shiny's MESSIAH, you play a baby angel who must stop the devil's work on Earth. However, to do so, you'll engage in some pretty evil deeds yourself. Because you're too small to put up much of a fight, you have to possess and use the bodies of your enemies. You can walk your possessed body off a catwalk and make it fall to its death. Or you can walk the body through open flames. Then, while the

body is burning, you can crawl along to add to its excruciating pain. Apart from letting you indulge in your most sadistic fantasies, possession will play a huge role in navigating the game's puzzles. You might have to inflict self-injury on a guard so that his cohorts will carry him (and, by extension, you) to an infirmary deeper into the base, thereby bypassing locked doors and sentries.

The graphics in MESSIAH look good. Using an engine called RT-DAT (real-time deformation and tessellation), Shiny will maintain the optimal frame rate by adding or subtracting polygons from inconspicuous areas of the screen. If you want to indulge your most twisted desires in a good-looking game, watch for MESSIAH this winter.

HERETIC II

Activision
(310) 255-2000
www.activision.com
Company ETA: Q4 '98
CGW's ETA: Q4 '98

In a departure from the traditional HEXEN line of games,

Raven's HERETIC II will embrace a third-person perspective. Raven has done this in order to make the HERETIC line a more adventure-oriented game, while bringing the HEXEN franchise more in-line with traditional first-person shooters like QUAKE. The company hopes the change in perspective will further distinguish the differing directions for the two franchises.

The sort of puzzles and exploration evident in previous HERETIC and HEXEN titles will flow naturally into HERETIC II, but the pacing will be a definite step up from that iconic third-person game, TOMB RAIDER. Expect plen-

ty of bad guys to hound you throughout this game's many beautifully rendered locales.

This time out, you play Corvus, the elf you controlled in HERETIC. Many of the enemies you'll fight will be tough hombres, so the powers at your disposal will be equally strong. There will be many powerful spells at your disposal, some with spectacular visual effects. Expect this blend of intense action and exploration adventure in Raven's signature fantasy universe to arrive in stores sometime late this year.

FIRETEAM

Multitude
(888) 689-TEAM
www.fireteam.com
Company ETA: Q3 '98
CGW's ETA: Early Q4 '98

FIRETEAM will be an online-only game from start-up Multitude. The focus of FIRETEAM is on team play. Traditionally, though, team play on the Internet has been stifled by the problems of gamers having to type while playing. In a fast-action game like FIRETEAM, there just isn't time to type commands to teammates. FIRETEAM looks to solve that by supporting voice technology and bundling a headset with each game.



There are at least four different game types, including gunball (lethal football), capture the flag, base tag, and team deathmatch. Teams consist of four gamers, with each gamer able to pick one of three different character types: gunner, sniper, or scout. Obviously, each class has different abilities, and you'll need to complement each other's abilities while coordinating your actions via the headsets. The real-time speech capability should position FIRETEAM as the first Internet game to really make good on the promise of fun and workable team play. Chat rooms and tournaments and Multitude's promised support of clans will

ensure that a community (which, along with gameplay, are the foundations for a good online game) is firmly supported for FIRETEAM. If you want to see for yourself how much fun this game is, just go to www.fireteam.com.

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PRINCE OF PERSIA 3D

Red Orb
(415) 382-4400
www.redorb.com
Company ETA: Q1 '99
CGW's ETA: Q2 '99

The Prince is back. Like Indiana Jones, this classic adventurer-explorer has returned to show Lara and her clones just how action-adventures are supposed to be done. Jordan Mechner, the designer of the previous two PRINCE games and the animated adventure game LAST EXPRESS, is plotting this

third installment of the PRINCE saga. This time, the graphics and engine are pure, gorgeous 3D. While the over-the-shoulder 3D look will be new, the gameplay that signified the previous POP games will definitely be back. The

setting is again ancient Persia, and the goal is to rescue the princess for yet a third time. Mechner, the consummate storyteller, will weave the game's 15 levels into a detailed story that escalates as the action increases. There will be quite a few enemy swordsmen and beguiling ladies to confront and subdue, but there will also be plenty of reflex-based puzzles and action sequences, such as jumps and evasion. The most striking feature of PRINCE OF PERSIA 3D is the excellent animation of the Prince himself, which rivals Lara Croft's fluidity.



INDIANA JONES AND THE INFERNAL MACHINE

LucasArts
(415) 472-3400
www.lucasarts.com
Company ETA: Q1 '99
CGW's ETA: Early Q2 '99

It had to happen. Indiana Jones, after seeing the fortune Lara Croft has made ridding off his signature derring-do in exotic tombs, has come out of retirement to show gamers how a real adventurer hunts artifacts.

INDIANA JONES AND THE INFERNAL

MACHINE will be a 3D action/adventure set in the early Cold War. The perspective will be familiar third-person, but the adventures, puzzles, and combat will be classic Indiana Jones. The Soviets want to build a machine that will open a rift to another dimension in order to gain great power. Indy has to stop them by finding the pieces to this machine before the Soviets do. Thus begins a chase to exotic locales around the globe, as Indy encounters fierce enemies, dastardly puzzles, and pursuing Commies.

Expect Indy to use his wits to solve environmental and logic puzzles, as well as his whip and several different weapons to fend off bad guys both human and animal.

WHEEL OF TIME

GT Interactive
(800) 610-4847
www.gtinteractive.com
Company ETA: Q1 '99
CGW's ETA: Q2 '99

WHEEL OF TIME is a tough game to describe. You play a hero who has to retrieve several artifacts from your rivals' well-defended castles. The conventional part of the game is that you travel to these castles, acquire some dazzling spell-like powers, surmount the



traps and enemies within, and take what you need.

However, while you are doing this, your own castle is undefended. That's where the level design part of the game comes in.

Before you leave to plunder enemy castles, you have to lay down traps and place monsters using a map editor disguised as an integral and intuitive part of the game interface. While the castle-storming part is very action-intensive, the castle design is a cerebral challenge that evokes the most intense of strategy games. You have to anticipate the moves and likely entry points of would-be robbers and design credible deterrents.

The single-player part of the game should also add a rich fantasy storyline and some interesting NPCs.

PREY

GT Interactive/3D Realms
(800) 610-4847
www.3drealms.com
Company ETA: Q1 '99
CGW's ETA: Q1 '99

One of the highlights for us at E3 was being given a private demo of PREY. The game looks to be the next level in first-person shooters, with its powerful engine, advanced geometry and mind-bending potential for interactivity. It features an American Indian named Talon Brave, who has the ability to use conventional weapons and magic as he develops spiritually



throughout the game. PREY's 3D engine abandons BSPs in favor of a new system known as Portal Technology. Portals allow destruction of the levels in a way never seen before. Whole walls, rooms, and levels may be changed or destroyed, and suitably devastating weaponry is planned to facilitate this. The engine appears to handle huge levels and large reflective surfaces with no slowdown. It's also capable of rendering scenes with much higher polygon counts than we've seen before. PREY could well be the most sophisticated and gorgeous 3D game to date.

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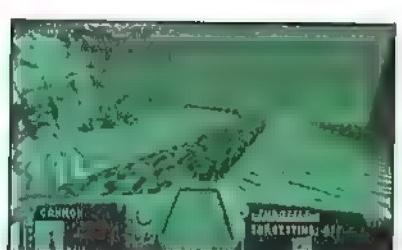
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**SLAVE ZERO**

Accolade
(408) 985-1700
www.accolade.com
Company ETA: Q3 '99
CGW's ETA: Q4 '99

Drawing inspiration from such anime films as *Evangelion* and *Macross Plus*, Accolade's giant robot game *Slave Zero* adds *Quake*-paced action and a sprawling, populated urban environment to the *MECHWARRIOR* formula. You are the sole pilot of an experimental robot called Slave Zero, the only thing standing between a wave of marauding evil robots and the city's destruction. Since the game takes place in a *Blade Runner*-like city with skyscrapers and mile-high freeways, the possibilities for creating mass

havoc are limitless. You can swing from bridges and gun down enemies below (taking out chunks of nearby buildings in the process), crawl up skyscrapers, and jump onto freeways and overturn cars with each thundering step.

The action will be more immediate than *MECHWARRIOR* 2's, as you fight multiple robots in intense battles in various cityscapes. Sean Vesce, the designer for *MECHWARRIOR* 2 and the director for *INTERSTATE '76*, is creating *Slave Zero*, and he hopes to make gamers feel as if they're in the middle of an exciting giant robot

**IN THE WORKS**

STARSIEGE: TRIBES is under development and takes place in the STARSIEGE universe (what used to be EARTHSIEGE before the change to a more rich and alien game universe). The main difference between this and the combat sim *STARSIEGE* is that you run around in a power suit instead of a giant robot.

QUAKE II: GROUND ZERO is the expansion pack coming from Rogue, the same folks who created *DISSOLUTION OF ETERNITY*. It will

have some exciting multiplayer maps and new weapons, including tesla bombs that shoot lightning at campers, proximity mines, a lightning gun-like laser rifle, and several other nasty toys. Look for it in September.

Also from Activision is **BENEATH**, a 3D action-adventure in which you play an archaeologist who explores huge underground caverns and tunnels. It should be a good-looking game with plenty of action and exploration. Look for it to arrive in mid-1999.

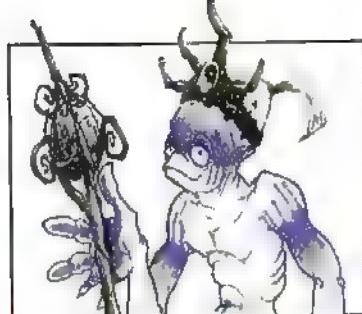
anime film and have it be just as much fun as *QUAKE* and *MECH 2*.

ROGUE SQUADRON

LucasArts
(415) 472-3400
www.lucasarts.com
Company ETA: Q4 '99
CGW's ETA: Q4 '99

LucasArts knew that the best parts of last year's mediocre *SHADOWS OF THE EMPIRE* were the flight portions—especially the Battle of Hoth, in which you got to pilot a snowspeeder, destroy probes and AT-ST walkers, and rope up giant AT-ATs. A blast for any gamer, *Star Wars* fan or not!

Well, LucasArts is taking that gameplay and blowing it up into a full game. This time, you play Luke Skywalker as you pilot a variety of spacecraft through more than a dozen free-roaming levels. Taking point for the famed Rogue Squadron, the Rebellion's crack fighter squadron, you'll fly X-wings, A-wings, Y-wings, and other ships against a gauntlet of Imperial fighters and machines. The levels you'll experience include familiar *Star Wars* planets such as Tatooine and Mon Calamari, while the environments include deserts, canyons, lava flows, and forests. Don't think that the missions will just be killing sprees, either. You'll have to rescue prisoners, escort convoys, and conduct surgical strikes on Imperial strongholds.

**ABE'S EXODUS**

GT Interactive
(800) 610-4847
www.gtinteractive.com
Company ETA: Q4 '98
CGW's ETA: Q4 '98

Our man Aboman is coming back, and his next game should truly shine. The biggest reason—apart from all the creative stuff that developer Oddworld Inhabitants dreams up—is that now you'll actually be able to save the game whenever you like.

This time Abe must journey to his homeland to stop the Glukkons from mining his ancestors' remains. The Glukkons (remember Mollock?) need bones to make SoulStorm Brew, and they have plenty of slaves to toil for them. Abe has to rescue the slaves and save the burial grounds, using sly moves, new speech commands, and new powers. He'll encounter familiar enemies, most of whom he can now control, and new ones, like Fleeches and Slurgs.

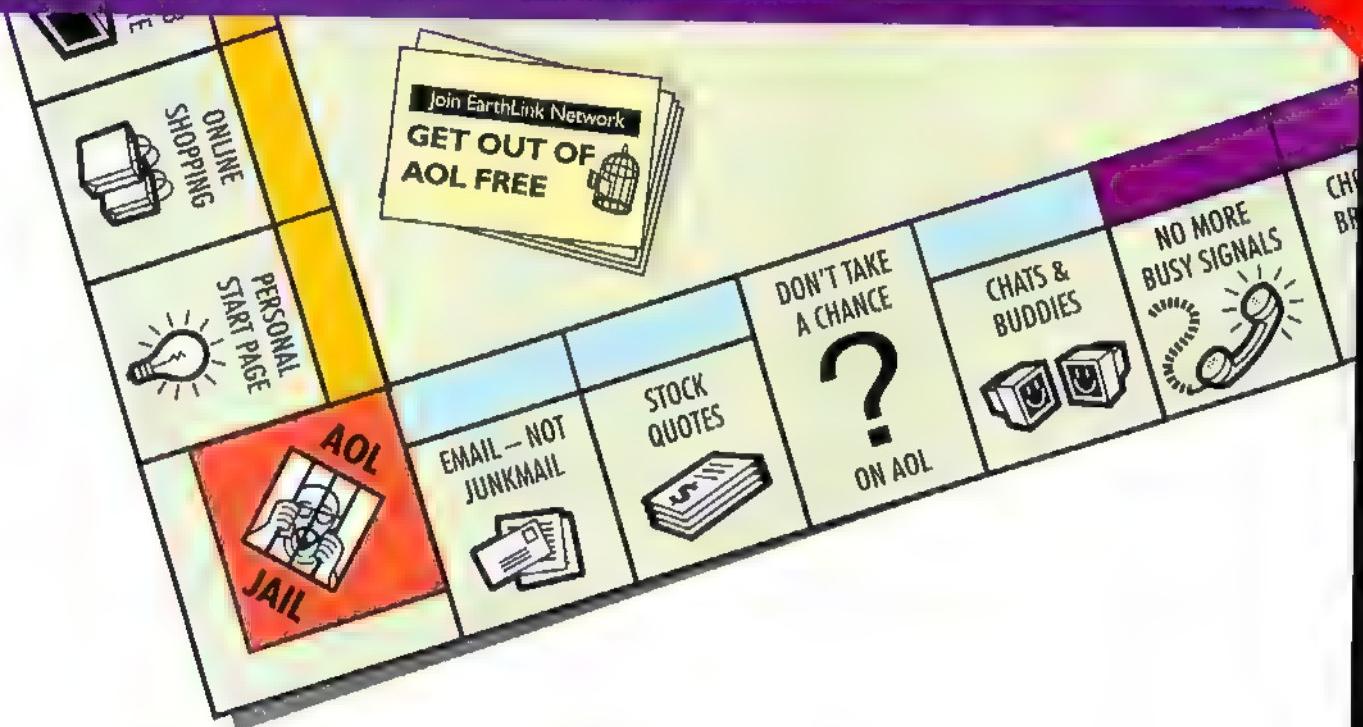
Oddworld games are truly brilliant in design and execution, with rich worlds and consistently clever challenges. This should be high on your list of coming attractions.

KLINGON HONOR GUARD promises to be another exciting first-person shooter. What will set it apart from the crowd is its Klingon universe. You'll be a Klingon, wield Klingon weapons, and shed alien blood across the *Star Trek* universe. Expect it sometime this winter.

Lara Croft will be back for her third adventure, and Core is very mindful of the fact that people want a real sequel and not just a rehash of *TOMB RAIDER*. Read our August cover story for the full scoop on *TOMB RAIDER III*.

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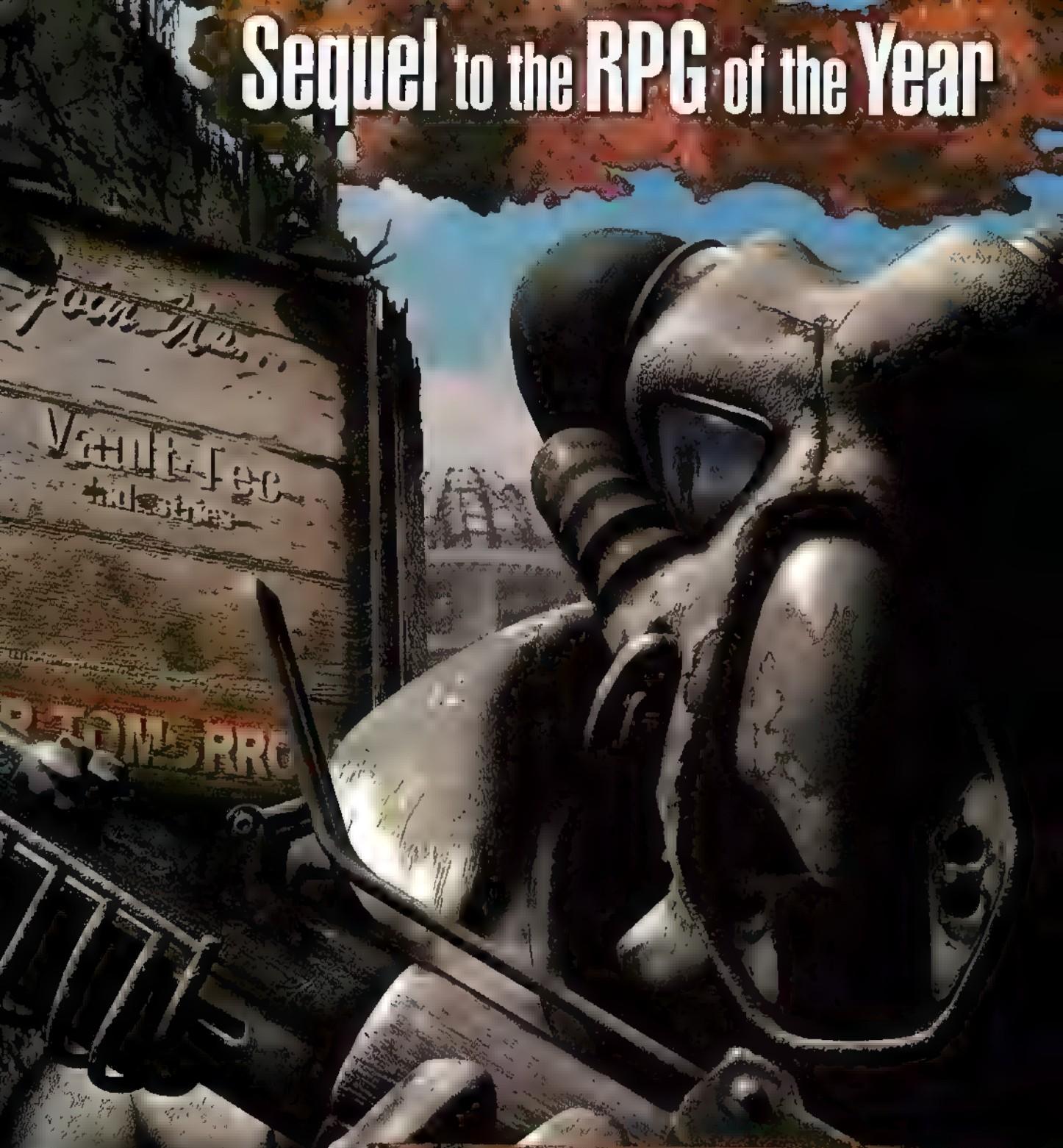
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GRIM FANDANGO

LucasArts
(415) 472-3400
www.lucasarts.com
Company's ETA: Q3 '98
CGW's ETA: Q4 '98

Grim is the perfect word to describe the state of adventure gaming these days: There are lots of bad games, and a few really great games suffering from poor sales. But *grim* is also a word to associate with the genre's best chance for a comeback this year. *GRIM FANDANGO*, LucasArts' upcoming 3D adventure game, is as original and exciting as any game we've seen this season—regardless of genre.

Designed and conceived by Tim Schafer (the creative force behind *DAY OF THE TENTACLE*, *FUJ THROTTLE*, and other classic LucasArts adventures), *GRIM*

FANDANGO is noticeably darker than anything the company has done before, while still retaining the smart humor that has always set LucasArts adventure games apart. This time around, Schafer has combined his interest in Mexican folklore with his love of film noir to tell a bizarre, original story set in the Land of the Dead.

The protagonist is Manny Calavera, a long-dead working-class stiff who's stuck with the task of welcoming newcomers to their new non-existence, and setting them on their five-year journey across the Land of the Dead. Manny wants out, though, and, as the game begins, he commits a desperate act that soon plunges him into the center of a *Double Indemnity*-style plot full of double-crossing schemers, menacing bad guys, and femmes fatale.



The 3D artwork, based on Mexican folklore and also modeled on Tim Burton's stop-motion animated classic movie *The Nightmare Before Christmas*, is a thing of strange beauty. The characters' painted 2D faces over 3D polygonal bodies create a look that is both haunting and cartoonish. Gameplay-wise, expect LucasArts' always-great puzzle design and first-

rate script. Note, however, that you'll "drive" the main character yourself, moving through and interacting directly with the environment, rather than just hunting for hot spots.

GRIM FANDANGO exemplifies a bold, challenging, and stylistic new direction for LucasArts. Anyone interested in the future of the adventure game genre should be excited. We sure are.



GABRIEL KNIGHT III: BLOOD OF THE SACRED, BLOOD OF THE DAMNED

Sierra Studios
(415) 649-9000
www.sierrastudios.com
Company ETA: Q3 '98
CGW's ETA: Q4 '98

Like LucasArts, Sierra is another company hoping to use 3D graphics as a way to jump-start the adventure-game genre and get gamers interested again. Although Sierra struck gold a couple years back with *GABRIEL KNIGHT 2: THE BEAST WITHIN* (which won CGW's 1996 Game of the Year award, among others), it probably represents—in retrospect—the

pinnacle of FMV-based adventure games, both in terms of artistic quality and popularity.

Now Sierra is forsaking video and returning the *GABRIEL KNIGHT* series to its animated roots, but with a brand-new 3D engine that will allow gamers to switch between first- and third-person points of view. Master storyteller Jane Jensen is once again at the helm, as she sets Gabriel Knight and Grace Nakamura off on another supernatural mystery centered around the kidnapped

newborn son of a dethroned prince in a small European village. Jensen writes the best stories in the business—deep, intelligent, and atmospheric—and *GK III* looks as though it will not disappoint. In the diminishing world of adventure gaming, *GABRIEL KNIGHT III* is one of the year's biggest events.

REDGUARD

Bethesda Softworks
(301) 926-8300
www.bethsoft.com
Company ETA: Q4 '99
CGW's ETA: Q4 '99

From the creators of *DAGGERFALL* comes another game set in the world of Tamriel. This is no RPG, however (you'll have to wait for *MORROWIND* for that), but instead a *PRINCE OF PERSIA*-style action adventure. (Notice a trend here?)

Set 40 years before *DAGGERFALL*,

REDGUARD puts you in the role of a mercenary redguard who, while investigating the disappearance of his sister, gets caught up in a web of political intrigue. As with Sierra's *MASK OF ETERNITY*, *REDGUARD* is a story-based adventure, but will ask you to deal with a certain amount of action gameplay, such as swordfighting.

Unlike *DAGGERFALL*, *REDGUARD*'s new 3D engine is gorgeous. And with the deep, rich backstory of Tamriel as established in previous games, *REDGUARD* stands a very good chance of bringing the *Elder Scrolls* series to a more mainstream gaming crowd.



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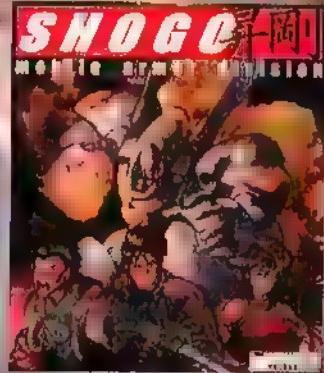
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SECRET OF VULCAN FURY

Interplay Productions
(408) 553-6655
www.interplay.com
Company ETA: Q3 '99
CGW's ETA: Q4 '99

Interplay has pushed this title back to fall 1999, but that's probably a good thing. Rushing *SECRET OF VULCAN FURY* out half-baked would have done no good, and after the nightmare that was *STAR TREK PINBALL*, Interplay owes the Trekker audience a good game.

And this game has serious potential. *SECRET OF VULCAN FURY* is a classic *Trek* tale, penned by D.C. Fontana (one of the series' original writers) and features voiceovers by the entire original cast. The story centers around the murder of a

Romulan ambassador on Vulcan, which plunges the crew of the *Enterprise* into the mystery surrounding the original separation of the Romulan and Vulcan races.

We've loved what we've seen of this game so far. The realistic 3D graphics have to be seen to be believed. Now Interplay just has to finish the dang thing.

KING'S QUEST: MASK OF ETERNITY

Sierra Studios
(408) 649-9800
www.sierrastudios.com
Company ETA: Q3 '98
CGW's ETA: Q4 '98

KING'S QUEST: *MASK OF ETERNITY* is another foray by Sierra into the brave new world of 3D adventure games. Again, Sierra is taking an estab-

lished franchise and completely revamping it—and, in this case, the changes are even more radical. With the series' longtime designer Roberta Williams again at the helm, *MASK OF ETERNITY* is being billed this time as an action/adventure—meaning that manual dexterity and combat will play a factor, in addition to the now-standard adventure game puzzle-solving.

Those with an open mind will soon discover, however, that this is, in fact, a *KING'S QUEST* game, faithful to the spirit of the 14-year-old series. Once again, Williams



has penned a high-fantasy, adventure tale set in the kingdom of Daventry. This time, some kind of destructive magical force has turned the inhabitants to stone, and it's up to Connor—the one person spared—to find out what's going on.

A beautiful new 3D engine, a strong plot, and Williams' good instincts for what makes a game work should put this one over. It's a gamble, to be sure, but, at this point, the genre could certainly use some fresh ideas.



GOOD & EVIL

Cavedog Entertainment
(425) 486-9258
www.coverlog.com
Company ETA: Q4 '99
CGW's ETA: Q4 '99

Honestly, we don't know much about this one yet, but the very fact that it exists was reason enough for us to rejoice. Why? Because it's the first adventure game in a long time from Ron Gilbert, the legendary designer behind LucasArts' *MONKEY ISLAND 1* and *2* games, and the man also behind *Humongous*, whose kids' adventure games (the *PUTT-PUTT*, *PAJAMA SAM*, and *FREDDI FISH* series) rank among the best in the business—for gamers of any age.

Gilbert's new game is being billed as an adventure/RPG/strategy title, with a top-down perspective. What we saw (a pirate town, a clown town, and a medieval setting) was cartoony in the classic LucasArts vein—and that's about all we have to say. Yet, we're still optimistic. After all, Gilbert's record is spotless.

IN THE WORKS

Normally, this space would be reserved for all the other exciting adventure games now in development. The only problem is, there hardly are any in development right now. As was the case with RPGs a few years ago, the adventure game genre is floundering right now, and the prognosis—except for the games on this list—is not so good. So just exactly why is this once-important genre wheezing along, trying to catch the action, strategy, and even role-playing titles as they leave it in the dust? The answer, as is usually the case, is money.

Adventure games are incredibly expensive to make, but publishers are simply not seeing the kind of sales they've now come to expect from the *DIABLO*-style blockbuster hits in other genres. Even last year's most acclaimed titles—*BLADE RUNNER*, *CURSE OF MONKEY ISLAND*, and *ZORK GRAND INQUISITOR*—didn't begin to approach the sales of a *QUAKE*, or, for that matter, *AGE OF EMPIRES*. (We're leaving *MYST* and *RIVEN* out of the discussion. Regardless of your opinion of those games, they're really pop-culture anomalies.)

Why? Maybe the slow-paced, lengthy nature of these games doesn't appeal to

today's quick-fix crowd. Maybe they simply require way too much of a time investment, even for people who like this kind of game. And maybe they're victims of technology—unable to compete with the visceral eye-candy available in almost every other genre.

In any event, something had to give—and it did. Adventure game development has dried up in a big way, and those still nobly pursuing the cause are doing what they can to expand the genre's horizons to reach a bigger—and younger—audience. We wish them the best. Next year, we don't want to have to write such a depressing lament.



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INTERGORE



THE INTENSOR SURVIVAL GUIDE

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PART ONE

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Fig. 1. A breakdown of what you're up against

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| 5 | High-range Tweeter |
| 6 | Sound Volume |
| 7 | Tactile Intensity |
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| 9 | Heavy Duty Single Cord Connector |
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| 12 | Headphone Jack |

PART TWO

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loud. So for the neighbors' sake, you may want to use the headphone jack—which you can do without losing any tactile feedback. But keep in mind—if your ears start bleeding, you should probably turn the thing down.

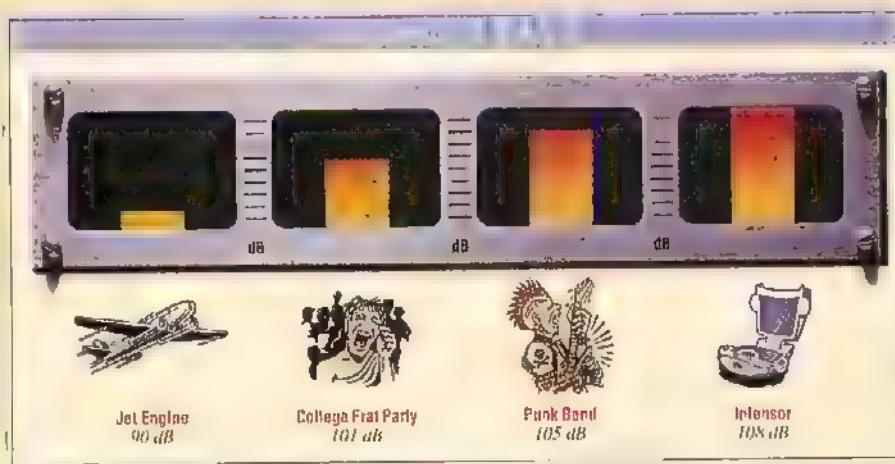


Fig. 2. At 19 pounds, Intensor is designed for quick evacuation in the event things get ugly. (Shaky hands will appreciate the built-in molded carrying handle.)

PART THREE

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DEFENSIVE PROCEDURES



Fig. 3a.
The Dodge



Fig. 3b.
The Weave



Fig. 3c.
The Duck

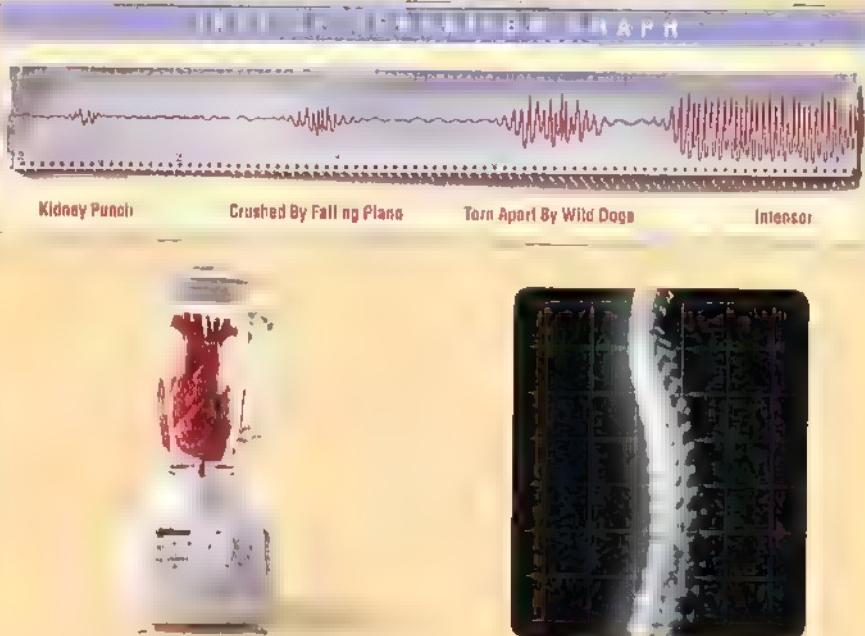


Fig. 4. Artist's conception of Sensory Gaming's effect on the human heart. Those with heart conditions should proceed at their own risk.



Fig. 5. Note: Players attempting to negotiate Intensor on anything less than a good, stiff spine may be reduced to a vegetative state

PART FOUR

Any game. Any system.
Any medium. After this, nothing
will ever be the same.



Fig. 6. Intensor has been known to induce shock. In such cases, place victim flat on back, elevate legs 8 to 12 inches and call for help. (If victim begins vomiting, place him or her on one side to allow fluid drainage.)

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www.intensor.com

Assuming you've read this carefully, proceed to your favorite gaming retailer.

INTENSOR

BALDUR'S GATE

Interplay Productions
(848) 553-6655
www.interplay.com
Company ETA: Q3 '98
CGW's ETA: Q4 '98

It's been a long time since there's been a good Advanced Dungeons & Dragons computer RPG—a pretty ridiculous delay given its status as the seminal role-playing experience, or at least the one that many of us cut our teeth on. But now Interplay looks as if it's going to reverse that trend in a big way (and at the same time make up for its last *AD&D* travesty, *DESCENT TO UNDERMOUNTAIN*). *BALDUR'S GATE* is a very ambitious new title, set in the *AD&D* Forgotten Realms world, with so much going for it that it is, without a doubt, the RPG we're most anxious to see this fall.

Sprawled out over five CDs, encompassing (according to the company) 10,000 distinct areas, *BALDUR'S GATE* is a single- and multiplayer role-playing game unlike any we've ever seen. Bioware, the game's developer, has had one big goal in mind while making the game: Keep it as faithful as possible to the spirit of the old *AD&D* campaigns you

played with your friends. And here's where the game gets really cool: Both the single- and multiplayer versions of *BALDUR'S GATE* tell the exact same story. Whether you play alone or with up to five other people over a LAN or the Internet, you are going to follow along the same epic, seven-chapter, save-the-world story, replete with about 100 side quests. The multiplayer experience is neither a persistent *ULTIMA ONLINE*-style world nor a *DIABLO*-style bashfest, but instead it lets six people campaign together cooperatively as the story and the action progress. The game is party-based, so, when you play alone, the computer takes the NPC slots. In multiplayer mode, each person is assigned control of one of the NPCs (and can drop in or out as necessary).



The game's isometric view is reminiscent of that of both *DIABLO* and *FALLOUT*, and combat takes place in realtime, though the game can be paused while you assign actions. Everything in the game—the combat-, spell-, character-, and class systems—strictly follows the *AD&D Player's Handbook* rules. That's great for the purists out there, but even gamers who aren't fans of *AD&D* should be psyched for this one. *BALDUR'S GATE* is the year's most ambitious and promising role-playing game.



RETURN TO KRONDOR

Sierra Studios
(425) 649-9800
www.sierrastudios.com
Company ETA: Q3 '98
CGW's ETA: Q4 '98

Fantasy author Raymond E. Feist's attempt to produce a sequel to his classic *BETRAYAL AT KRONDOR* (now enshrined in CGW's Hall of Fame) is a battle that's been going on for years. Now, finally, it may really be reaching a conclusion. *RETURN TO*

KRONDOR, developed by Pyro-Technix and now being published by Sierra, is a brand new 10-chapter story, written by Feist and set in his fantasy

world of Midkemia about 10 years after the conclusion of his epic *Riftwar* novels. As in *BETRAYAL*, the game is party-based, though now all the characters are completely 3D, modeled over beautiful pre-rendered backgrounds that bring Midkemia to life. Combat is both turn-based and 3D, providing for ample tactical thinking. Don't let this game's eternal delays turn you off. Feist is a consummate storyteller and gamer. *RETURN TO KRONDOR*, if it actually ships, is a guaranteed winner.

DIABLO II

Blizzard Entertainment
(310) 793-0600
www.blizzard.com
Company ETA: Q2 '99
CGW's ETA: Who knows?

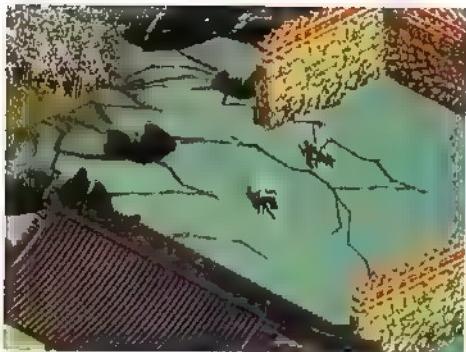
Like it or not, *DIABLO* was the game that made RPGs cool again, winning over legions of new gamers and convincing publishers that the genre was not only alive, but profitable. Now Blizzard's megahit is coming back for more—and what can we say? Blizzard is beefing up every aspect of both the single- and multiplayer



experience, fixing what didn't work and adding a lot more.

The story (and Blizzard is promising that there will be more of one this time around) picks up where *DIABLO* left off—except that, as it turns out, your character is toast and Diablo is back and stronger than ever. There are five new character classes (paladin, barbarian, amazon, necromancer, and sorceress), a new skill system for greater customization, outdoor and indoor settings, a cleaner interface, much faster load times, and more. Sure, whine about it not

being a real role-playing game and about Blizzard always being late. But face it: You're still going to want *DIABLO II* the day it comes out.



SWORDS AND SORCERY: COME DEVILS, COME DARKNESS

Virgin Interactive Entertainment
(714) 833-8710
www.vie.com
Company ETA: Q4 '98
CGW's ETA: Q4 '98

Virgin Interactive's first RPG might not have crossed our radar were it not for one significant fact: It's the new game from acclaimed RPG designer D.W. Bradley, the wizard behind the classic *WIZARDRY* series. Like that series, *Swords*

detailed character-development system for which D.W. Bradley is known. With the potential to attract both the hard-core crowd that

followed the *WIZARDRY* series, as well as newer gamers intrigued by the bells and whistles, *SWORDS AND SORCERY* is one to watch.

LEGEND OF THE FIVE RINGS: RONIN

Activision
(310) 255-2000
www.activision.com
Company ETA: Q4 '98
CGW's ETA: Q4 '98

Of the many *DIABLO*-inspired RPGs now in development, *LEGEND OF THE FIVE RINGS: RONIN* strikes us as the most interesting and promis-



AND SORCERY promises old-school fantasy role-playing—but gussied up for the late '90s. The party-based RPG will feature both single- and multiplayer modes (with both turn-based and real-time combat) and a brand-new 3D engine. You'll also be able to take your character back and forth between the single- and multi-player game—a nice innovation. Along with all the chrome, the game will boast the kind of deep,

ing. Based on the collectible card game of the same name, *LEGEND OF THE FIVE RINGS* is fantasy RPG set in a feudal society inspired by Japanese and Chinese mythology and history. The game is set in the fantasy world of Rokugan, where you play a young samurai who is sent by a sorceress to locate the pieces of a sacred artifact. With its isometric viewpoint, action sequences, and multiplay, it does resemble *DIABLO*—but

IN THE WORKS

It's a sign of this genre's remarkable resurgence that there are far more RPGs—good ones—than we could possibly cover in this feature. Two years ago, who would have guessed it? Here are some of the other new titles, which we'll cover more thoroughly in future issues. Sir-Tech's *WIZARDRY VIII* is the long-awaited new game in one of the oldest (and best) RPG series ever. We should have a lot more on this one next month. Westwood Studios' *LANDS OF LORE III* looks like it will be a major improvement over the previous edition, which disappointed many gamers after much anticipation. The new 3D engine looks awesome, and the gameplay has a much stronger RPG bent than before. Sierra Studios' Eldos' *REVENANT* is another *DIABLO*-alike, but cool artwork and a good storyline may help distinguish it from the pack. Also, Tom Hall is holed up somewhere, pounding out his epic *ANACHRONOX* for Ion Storm.

A host of "massively multiplayer" (a term we loathe) Internet RPGs are on the way—though we've learned from past mistakes not to start hyping these before their time. Sony Interactive's *EVERQUEST* is the most promising of the bunch, with unbelievable graphics and a good, strong character-development system. We hope to have a hands-on look at this one soon. Microsoft's *ASHERON'S CALL* is another promising game—but, again, more on this later. One that we're really, really excited about is Sierra's *MIDDLE EARTH*, an upcoming Internet game set in the world created by some guy named Tolkien. And, finally, we couldn't get away without mentioning *ULTIMA IX*, now could we? What can we say? We'll believe it when we see it.

what sets it apart is its totally unique setting. As with *FALLOUT*, this is an RPG that offers something other than elves and dwarves for a change. And any game that lets us role-play a samurai (whether that's John Goodman or Toshiro Mifune) is one we can't wait to check out.

FALLOUT 2

Interplay Productions
(949) 553-6655
www.interplay.com
Company ETA: Q4 '98
CGW's ETA: Q4 '98

Quality-starved role-players finally hit the mother-lode last year with Interplay's *FALLOUT*, widely considered the best RPG in years (and undisputed choice for CGW's 1997 RPG of the Year award). Now, not surprisingly, a sequel is in the works, and while it may not break any new ground, it should still prove to be one of

the more enjoyable role-playing experiences. Set in Northern California 50 years after *FALLOUT*, the game casts you as "The Chosen One," a descendant of your original character, given the task of rediscovering Vault 13 in hopes of retrieving a holy relic that can end the 10-year drought that has plagued the land.

FALLOUT 2 uses the same engine (a good thing), but boasts a much bigger environment, better control over party members, much better NPC AI (our biggest complaint of the first game), and more. If it's half as good as *FALLOUT*, it'll still be a must-buy.



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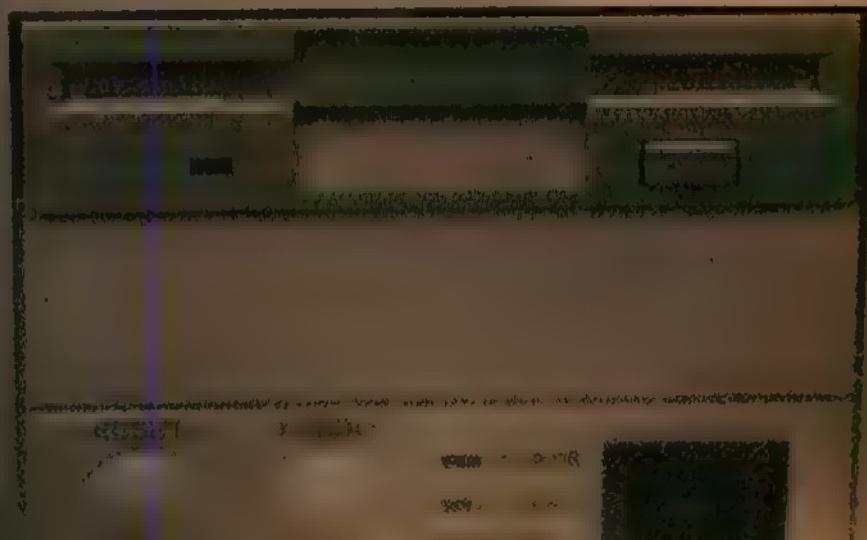
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MADDEN NFL 99

EA Sports
(650) 571-7171
www.easports.com
Company ETA: Q3 '98
CGW's ETA: Q4 '98

Like the double three-repeat Chicago Bulls, EA Sports is an utterly dominant organization. Though it's human nature to get cynical—and to want to root for the underdogs—the fact of the matter is that EA is so good at what it does that sometimes you just have to sit back and enjoy the show. EA's NHL, NBA, and FIFA games have all been completely awesome the last couple years—not perfect, not without their flaws, but still state-of-the-art models of entertaining sports gaming. MADDEN NFL, however, has been a weak link for a few seasons now, not remotely up to the level of its siblings.

MADDEN NFL 99 may change that. First, the game is finally converting to full 3D-polygonal graphics (as opposed to the "polygon enhanced sprites" of MADDEN 98). The result, as shown in the latest FIFA games, is fantastic. Second, the MADDEN team has worked hard to enhance the gameplay for both novice and experienced players. MADDEN veterans will be very pleased to learn that there is finally a play editor, as well as a franchise mode. We admit to spending no time with either feature—so their worth remains to be seen—but credit EA for being interested enough to try to deepen the game. On the other end of the spectrum, EA is hoping to draw in novice



gamers with a new "one-button" mode, in which a single "action" button on your gamepad or keyboard will perform all actions in the game (the AI will determine what to do based on what's happening on the field). Simplistic? Yes. But actually a good idea for the gamepad-impaired. Multiplay is there, of course, though

Internet play is limited to coach-only mode—a limitation that really must end soon. (Maybe in a patch?) It's going to be a competitive year for PC football games (there are three on this list alone), but, for now, we give the nod to MADDEN—the best chance for the best marriage of brains and chrome.



NASCAR RACING 99

Sierra Sports
(800) 757-7707
www.sierrasports.com
Company ETA: Q4 '98
CGW's ETA: Q1 '99

One of the greatest auto-racing franchises (along with MicroProse's GRAND PRIX) is coming back for more amidst stiffer competition than in years past. With the rise of 3D graphics, a number of new racing sims have hit the tracks in the last

year, including Ubi Soft's excellent F1 RACING SIMULATION and the (we admit it) overrated Microsoft CART PRECISION RACING. But Dave Kaemmer and the team at Papyrus are roaring back this winter with NASCAR RACING 99, and they are looking to up the ante yet again. The new engine, also featured in their upcoming GRAND PRIX LEGENDS, is perhaps the best ever seen in a racing sim, and the 3D-accelerated graphics and brand-new physics model are stunning. Another huge improvement will be

the opponent AI, which, we are told, will react realistically to your moves. The first two games in this series were five-star mini-masterpieces. There's no reason to expect anything less from NASCAR RACING 99.



FOOTBALL PRO '99

Sierra Sports
(800) 757-7707
www.sierrasports.com
Company ETA: Q4 '98
CGW's ETA: Q4 '98

Sierra has officially retired the "FRONT PAGE SPORTS" name, but not the games themselves. It was a good call, as that name was losing its luster after a few less-than-great releases. Now called simply FOOTBALL PRO '99, Sierra's pigskin game has been rebuilt from the ground up, and is looking to recapture the fire that made it a three-time winner of CGW's Sports Game of the Year

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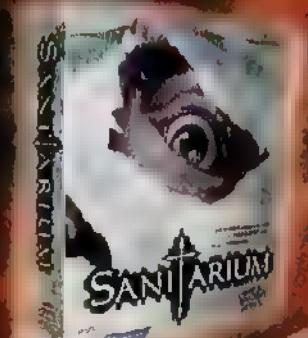
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NATIONAL HOCKEY TONIGHT

ESPN Digital Games

(415) 229-9100

www.radical-entertainment.com

Company ETA: Q4 '98

CGW's ETA: Q4 '98

Never heard of this one? Didn't know that ESPN was in the computer gaming business? Yeah, neither did we. Then, upon doing a little dig-

ging, we discovered that ESPN Digital Games is actually in league with gaming veterans Radical Entertainment, designers of the NHL POWERPLAY games. Suddenly we got very interested. NATIONAL HOCKEY TONIGHT is the next-generation version of POWERPLAY, a great game that never had the marketing muscle to compete with EA Sports. Now, with the ESPN branding, the

hopes are higher. Accompanying NHT's already-proven gameplay is cool ESPN chrome. ESPN Sports-Center anchor Steve Levy and hockey analyst Gary Thorne call the games, while—and this we really like—a sports ticker at the bottom of the screen, hooked up to ESPN's Web site, will provide scores of current, real-life games as you play. Now that's cool.

TIGER WOODS 99

EA Sports

(650) 571-7171

www.easports.com

Company ETA: Q3 '98

CGW's ETA: Q4 '98

EA Sports scored the licensing coup of the decade when it signed Tiger Woods for its golf franchise. Always overshadowed by



NFL GAMEDAY '99

Sony Interactive

(619) 824-5500

www.sonyinteractive.com

Company ETA: Q3 '98

CGW's ETA: Q3 '98

PlayStation gamers have flocked to NFL GAMEDAY for years, making it easily the most popular football game on that platform. Now it's finally making its way to the PC, and it's looking strong. The game's arcade play is intuitive and fun on the PSX, and it should make the transition to the PC without any problems. A 3D accelerator

LINKS and JACK NICKLAUS on the PC, the game formerly known as PGA Tour promises to skyrocket in popularity with Mr. Woods on the box and in the game. Play with or against nine real PGA Tour players, including you-know-who, on three courses: Pebble Beach Golf Links, TPC at Sawgrass, and TPC at

IN THE WORKS

There are plenty of other worthy titles in the works to keep sports fans happy throughout the coming year. EA Sports, of course, has other pearls in its lineup, including NBA LIVE 99 and NHL 99, the latest versions of two perennial favorites. The big wildcard for EA is KNOCKOUT KINGS, a 3D boxing title that lets you fight as (or against) tons of real-life boxers, including Muhammad Ali, Evander Holyfield, and golden-agers such as Joe Louis and Jake LaMotta. The possibilities are awesome—but will it be more than just a glorified arcade fighting game? Sierra Sports also has much more in store, including a fantasy football game, an update to its well-received golf game, and a new basketball title, BASKETBALL PRO '99, which, it's said, will bring FRONT PAGE-style franchise management to the game. (Does this mean we can actually fire Latrell Sprewell?) ESPN Digital Games is pumping out NBA BASKETBALL TONIGHT and X GAMES PRO BOARDER for its initial launch this fall. Again, the folks at Radical Entertainment know what they're doing, so watch these games closely. Fox Sports, not to be outdone by ESPN, is getting into the computer gaming business too, with two initial PC titles just released: FOX SPORTS GOLF '99 and FOX SPORTS SOCCER '99. The emphasis is said to be on the action side. Microsoft, with BASEBALL 3D finally out the door, is now hard at work on very-promising basketball and football titles. We've seen these games a couple times now, and so far so good. We hope to cover all of these and more in upcoming issues of CGW.



card will be required, which is becoming standard fare for sports games. The biggest news about GAMEDAY is that it will be the first football game to let gamers compete in arcade play (as opposed to just coach mode) over the Internet, through a battle.net-type service. This is a huge first and a big coup over MADDEN. It's a virgin PC title, so we won't do the wave for it yet—but keep your eyes open.

Summerlin. The game's easy Internet connectivity, which debuted in the last PGA TOUR game, is back, and the graphics will now offer 3D acceleration. Will TIGER WOODS 99 match LINKS in terms of gameplay? Only time will tell. But the novelty and flash factor of this title are impossible to ignore. If any golf game has the potential to bring in a younger demographic of gamers, this is it. And that's a good thing.

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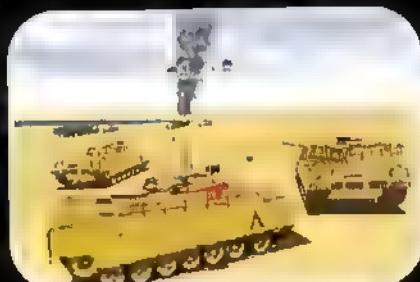
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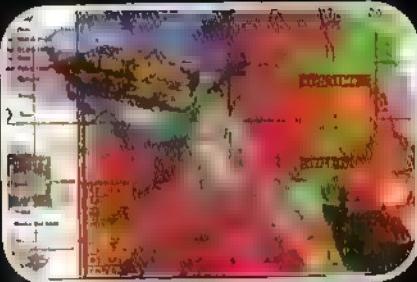
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WWII FIGHTERS

Jane's Combat Simulations
(415) 571-7171
www.janes.ea.com
Company ETA: Q4 '98
CGW's ETA: Q4 '98

If the reaction to the game at the recent Electronic Entertainment Expo (E3) show was any indication, *WWII FIGHTERS* (originally known as *FIGHTER LEGENDS*) is one of the most hotly anticipated simulations of the year. The reasons are many: Foremost among them, this will be one of the first all-new World War II sims to hit the shelves in years. The buzz was loud, though, because it's by far the most graphically impressive World War II sim—in fact, one of the best looking flight sims *period*—slated to be shipped this year. Amazingly detailed aircraft, 3D virtual cockpits with more detail than you're used to seeing on flat bitmapped panels, and clouds that look as real as those

you'd see from Row 18 of a 737 make for a strong visual impression. But there's more here than eye candy. The game is built on feedback from the long-running U.S. NAVY FIGHTERS jet sim series, so you can look forward to a powerful mission editor, realistic mission goals, and multiplayer support for up to eight human pilots on LAN or via Jane's Online Gaming Center.

WWII FIGHTERS' campaign is set during the Battle of the Bulge. Flyable aircraft include the P-38 Lightning, P-47D Thunderbolt, P-51D Mustang, Messerschmitt Bf-109G-6 and Me-262, Focke-Wulf 190A-8, and the Spitfire Mk.IX. Jane's is promising detailed flight models with authentic performance for each of the planes. The historical campaign is set up with branching missions, so the performance of your squadron can affect the



outcome of the war. The game's editor will allow you to create your own missions, complete with random elements to add a level of unpredictability. And as you've come to expect from a

Jane's title, there's a complete database of information on each of the sim's aircraft, complete with video interviews of real-life WWII vets such as triple-ace Clarence "Bud" Anderson.



WARGASM

Digital Image Design
(408) 289-1411
www.did.com
Company ETA: Q4 '98
CGW's ETA: Q1 '99

The game with the memorable name is a bit of a departure for the UK's DID. It's as much a real-time strategy game as a simulation. You direct the strategic war, and then jump into the cockpit of one of 20

different types of vehicles, ranging from Comanche helicopters to A-10 Warthogs to M1A2 tanks. With so many vehicles simulated, it's only natural that the control systems have been simplified. Despite the simplified interface (which should make the game more accessible to strategy and action players), the performance and capabilities of each vehicle remain accurate. And the game's multiplayer mode (called, of course,

"Multiple WARGASM") is the electronic battlefield realized—you can play everything from a tank driver to an infantryman to a pilot. In the early version we saw, the graphics were dazzling, complete with impressive weather effects and Hollywood-style explosions. WARGASM has the potential to be the real-time strategy game for simulation fans.

FLY!

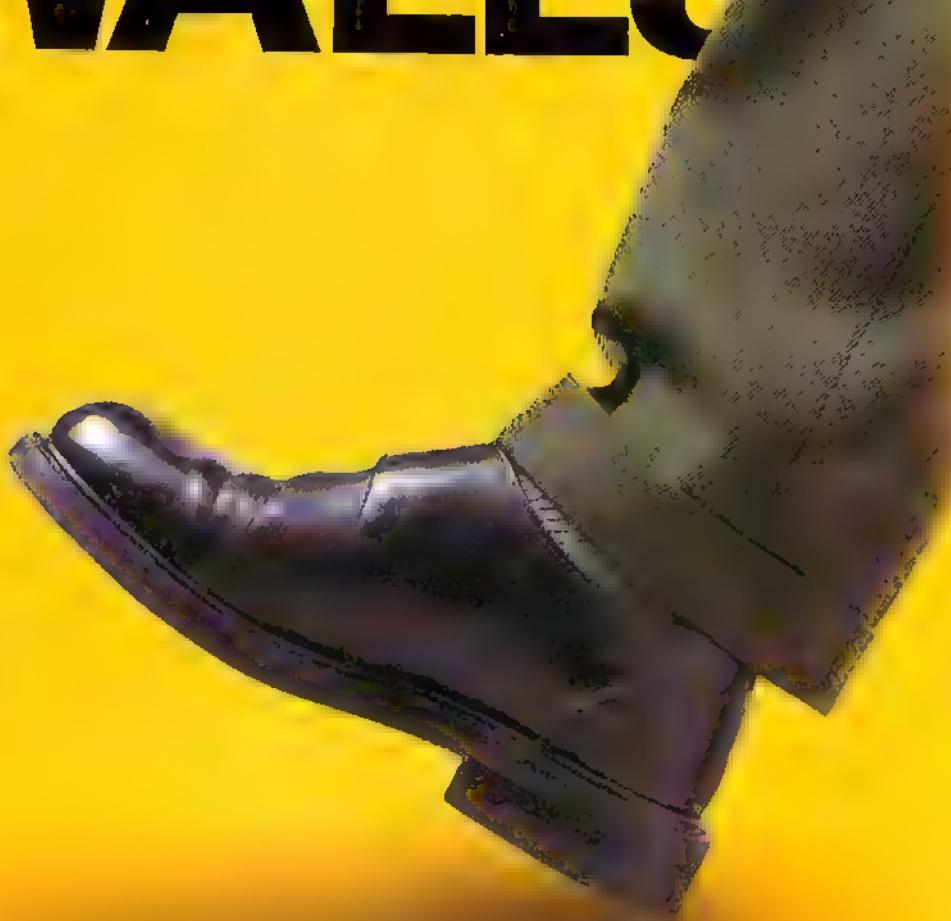
Terminal Reality
(972) 221-2264
www.terminalreality.com
Company ETA: Q4 '98
CGW's ETA: Q1 '99

In the civilian category, each of the current flight-sims excels in some areas while falling short in others. Terminal Reality's *FLY!* attempts to include the works in one package. Both real and wannabe pilots should appreciate the full avionics packages for each of the simulated aircraft (from



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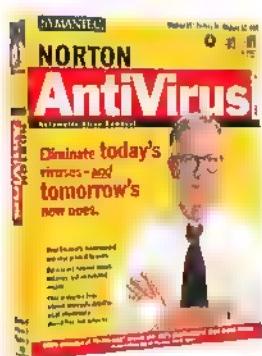
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You can replace just about everything in and around your computer — except your data. Lose your data and your only alternative is to recreate it, something that can take entirely too much time.



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One of the most effective ways to ensure that your data is safe is to keep your hard disk as free as possible of unwanted files and applications.

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You've probably noticed already that as you put more and more applications on your computer and start using them at the same time, everything hangs. Maybe it's just a simple application lockup. Or maybe there's nothing you can do but turn off your computer and then turn it back on again — and lose the stuff you were working on.

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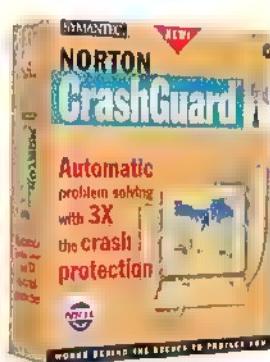
And Norton CrashGuard Deluxe comes with more than 140 instructional videos explaining everything from cleaning a CD-ROM to changing display settings.

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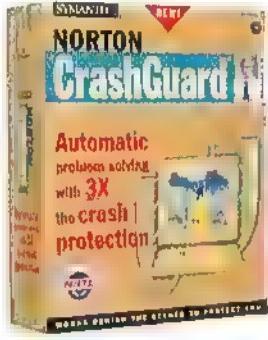
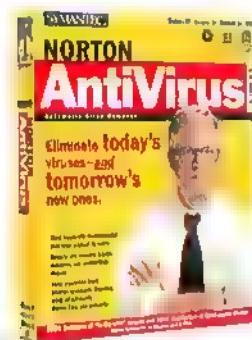
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PANZER ELITE

Psynopsis
(650) 287-6500
www.psynopsis.com
Company ETA: Q1 '99
CGW's ETA: Q1 '99

Developed in Germany, Psynopsis' PANZER ELITE has the potential to be the FALCON of tank simulations. Although there's a beginner's mode, which lets you drive your tank from the external view, the realistic mode not only buttons you up inside the tank, but also

gives you realistic view restrictions from the various stations. Detailed terrain, complete with realistic buildings and individual trees (rather than blocky tree lines), makes it that much harder to spot enemy tanks. You'll be able to drive over trees or blow out a structure and use the remaining walls for cover. The damage model isn't table-based—it actually follows the path of a shell inside a tank and disables the appropriate systems (or crewmembers). The goal of

the game is to survive the war, and with all the realism options turned on your chances of survival are slim. As the war progresses, your unit will even suffer from ammo and fuel shortages.

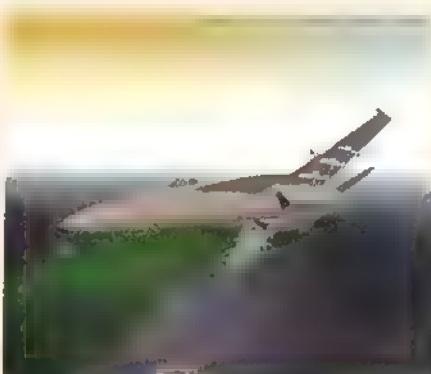
**SUPER HORNET**

Titus
(818) 709-3692
www.titusgames.com
ETA: Q4 '98
CGW's ETA: Q4 '98

Digital Integration is going head-to-head with former distributor Interactive Magic by releasing its own F/A-18E simulator. Although the graphics engine is an enhanced, Direct3D version of the one seen in F-16, the underlying simulation has undergone dramatic upgrades.

Hard-core simulation fans will be happy to know that SUPER HORNET sees the return of a TORNADO-style mission planner. Three dynamic campaigns—set in the Barents Sea, Indian Ocean, and Persian Gulf—are available for solo play. Multiplayer mode supports 16 players for

head-to-head missions or four players on cooperative strikes. Carrier ops are very detailed, with crowded decks, crewmembers marshaling aircraft to catapults, and landing signal officers grading your carrier traps. The cockpit features an active



instrument panel, authentic radar displays, multiple autopilot modes, and both fixed and virtual cockpit views. Although Digital Integration is striving for very realistic flight and instrument models, there are plenty of aids for the beginning sim gamer, including a simulation of the F/A-18E's autoland mode.



Developer General Simulations has based the flight modeling on a simulation engine actually used in USAF sims, and the company has also paid careful attention to cockpit systems and weapons modeling. (We hope the realism

survives the final cut this time, after what happened to SABRE ACE.) The campaigns—set in Madagascar, the Rift Valley, Morocco, and Ethiopia—may be a bit fanciful, but with FALCON 4.0 actually threatening to ship, it's perhaps good that F-16 AGGRESSOR approached the campaign from a different angle. The scripted campaigns cast you as a mercenary helping to quell rebel uprisings in these regions. The graphics engine is very impressive, especially on high-end systems that are running at 1024x768 resolution.

EUROPEAN AIR WAR

MicroProse
(310) 864-4550
www.microprose.com
Company ETA: Q4 '98
CGW's ETA: Q4 '98

In development nearly as long as FALCON 4.0, this World War II sim has been shown at all four E3 shows. What we saw this year, though, was a product that finally looks close to shipping—and one that no longer looks like an SVGA update of the ancient 1942: PACIFIC AIR WAR. The graphics

have been reworked with impressive 3D card support and the best flak effects we've ever seen, and T. K. Kawahito and his team have done an impressive job modeling the sim's 20 flyable fighter aircraft. You'll be able to fly in both the Battle of Britain and the battle for Europe in the only dynamic campaign to be found in this year's crop of World War II sims. The period interface and music set a wonderful mood for one of the most authentic of the upcoming WWII sims. Multiplayer support rounds out the package.



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ULTRA FIGHTERS

Interactive Magic
(919) 461-0722
www.imagicgames.com
Company ETA: Q4 '98
CGW's ETA: Q4 '98

This sim from Interactive Magic takes an updated version of Eagle Interactor's SABRE ACE engine and moves it to the 26th century, when world superpowers are duking it out over the Solomon Islands in subsonic, laser-equipped planes. The planes are launched from aircraft carriers that hover over the ocean. Sound weird enough? The thinking behind this rather odd scenario is to create a simulation that pairs the slower, up-close combat of World War II aircraft with the accessibility afforded by modern radar systems. Think ACES OF THE PACIFIC meets WING COMMANDER. We know, it sounded hokey to us.

as well, but the alpha version actually comes across as a good entry-level simulation. An original concept, certainly, but we have to wonder how Interactive Magic could think these wacky future fighters were the best choice when they could have had Eagle resurrect its F-4 Phantom sim?

**NATIONS: FIGHTER COMMAND**

Psygnosis
(800) 438-7794
www.psygnosis.com
Company ETA: Q1 '99
CGW's ETA: Q2 '99

Coming from the studio that created the AGP extravaganza G-POLICE, NATIONS: FIGHTER COMMAND should look good—and it does. But Psygnosis isn't going for style without substance here. The game's developers have pored over wartime records in an attempt to re-create historical missions as accurately as possible. In addition, a mission

editor will let you try your hand at creating battles, and Psygnosis promises a variety of multiplayer game styles. You'll be able to fly for the Americans, British, or Germans, in planes ranging from the P-51B Mustang to the de Havilland Mosquito. The graphics engine uses a particle system to create impressive explosion effects and realistic weather. Clouds look particularly impressive, especially during thunderstorms. All this comes at a price, though—at E3, Psygnosis was recommending a Pentium II and a 3D card with 8MB of RAM for optimal performance.

**APACHE-HAVOC**

Empire Interactive
(800) 216-9706
www.empire-us.com
Company ETA: Q1 '98
CGW's ETA: Q4 '98

Razorback Studios' APACHE-HAVOC was designed from the ground up with multiplayer play in mind. Gamers face off in the American AH-64 Apache and the Russian Mi-28N Havoc attack helicopters, two very different machines, which should require different

approaches to play. The Apache features a modern, electronic, glass cockpit; the Havoc, despite being a newer design, has a traditional, "round dial" cockpit setup. The terrain features raised forest

canopies (although the early versions we saw had polygonal tree lines rather than individual trees), which should make for some interesting uses of line-of-sight tactics. Graphics are quite impressive: The helicopters and other vehicles feature very high polygon counts, and the weather effects are among the most authentic we've seen yet. It's not all that hard-core, but APACHE-HAVOC looks as if it will strike a good balance between realism and gameplay.

FIGHTER SQUADRON: SCREAMIN' DEMONS OVER EUROPE

Activision
(310) 255-2000
www.activision.com
Company ETA: Q4 '98
CGW's ETA: Q4 '98

This long-delayed sim from Activision and Parsoft had some development snags, but the latest versions we've seen indicate that development is heading into the home stretch. By far the most impressive aspect of



this World War II sim is its physics modeling. Dive a plane and pull up too hard and you can literally bend it—if it doesn't come apart from stress. Slam your landing gear down too hard, and the wheel will snap off and bounce down the runway. Saw off the wing of a bomber and it spins down to the ground just like you've seen in old newsreel footage. FIGHTER SQUADRON is also notable as the only single-player WWII sim in the works that lets you fly heavy bombers. The game's 30-plus missions can be

played from any side, and from the cockpits of any type of plane in the mission. A comprehensive mission-editor lets you create your own missions, and Parsoft's Open Plane Interface means you're likely to see a variety of add-on aircraft for the sim.

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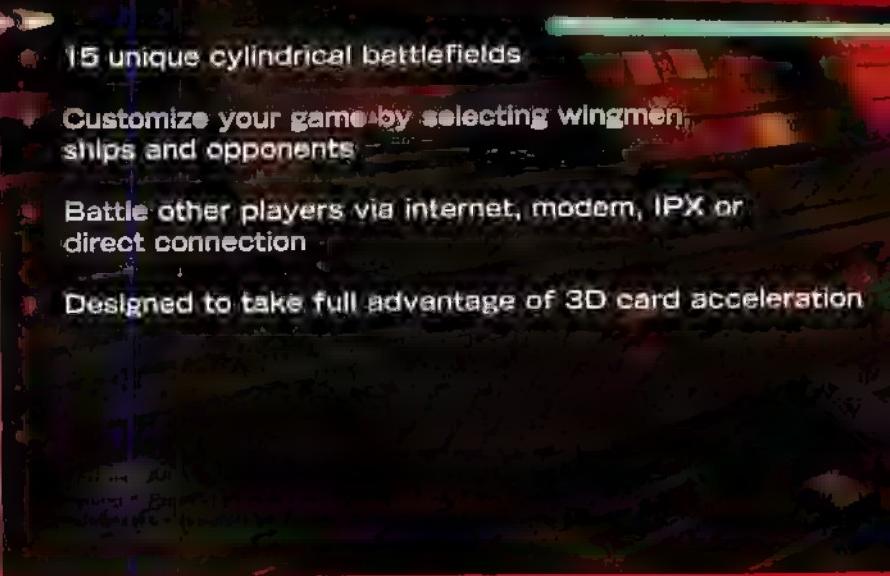
You know the feeling. It sets in around the 5th or 6th pot. It's a bit beyond the traditional adrenaline rush. Well, that's what it feels like when you get to the 5th and 6th cylinders in Dead Reckoning. And with 9 more cylinders left to conquer, each featuring a more challenging alien opponent than the last, you'll be wired for days.

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F/A-18 CARRIER STRIKE FIGHTER

Interactive Magic
(919) 461-0722
www.magicgames.com
Company ETA: Q3 '98
CGW's ETA: Q3 '98

Landing your plane on an aircraft carrier, hitting that arrester hook on target, and not going off the other side in a belly flop has to be one of the most satisfying things you can do in a flight simulation. And it's one

area in which IF-18 CARRIER STRIKE FIGHTER should excel, since former A-6 Intruder pilot Jim Harler is at the helm of the project. The basic flight engine in the game is an enhancement of the one in IF-22 v5.0 and it uses an updated version of I-Magic's Demon graphics engine, allowing you to fly over real-world satellite-mapped imagery. This engine looks best at considerable altitude. Low-level visuals aren't nearly as impressive. For instance,

DAWN OF ACES

Interactive Magic
(919) 461-0722
www.imagiconline.com
Company ETA: Q3 '98 (free beta)
CGW's ETA: Q3 '98

Take the tried-and-true WARBIRDS simulation engine, replace the high-performance planes with fabric-and-wood World War I aircraft, and you have I-Magic Online's DAWN OF ACES. Set on the western front, the game will feature a two-sided war instead of the less realistic

four-sided WARBIRDS campaign. Among the initial flyable planes will be the Sopwith Camel, Spad S.VII, Bristol F2B, Fokker Dr.I, and Albatros D.Va. As with WARBIRDS, the game will be under constant development, and more planes will be added periodically. In some ways combat will be easier than in WARBIRDS, due to the slower speed of the World War I aircraft, but budding aces will also quickly learn that these early warplanes can be very touchy and must be handled with respect.



the sea looks like black-flecked blue velvet. IF-22 was at its strongest with its dynamic mission structure and campaign feel. The Middle East flashpoint scenarios here—with

CAPs, deep strikes, and cooperative missions—offer promising play from a campaign standpoint, even if the engine is struggling to catch up with the current state of the art.

IN THE WORKS

MicroProse has announced that it is developing GUNSHIP III, a helicopter simulation that will interface with its M1 TANK PLATOON II product. You'll be able to fly Apaches, Comanches, and other craft on the same battlefield as M1 players. Look for it in mid-1999. Meanwhile, Looking Glass is still keeping quiet on the feature sets of FLIGHT UNLIMITED III and FLIGHT: COMBAT, both set for 1999 releases, but the company did announce that the products would be distributed through Electronic Arts.

We recently saw some impressive progress on SSI's Russian-developed jet sim, SU-27 FLANKER 2.0. Along with one of the most impressive 3D graphics engines we've seen yet and the trademark SU-27 realism, the sim will now sport a beginner's mode. Given the amount of integration remaining to be done when we saw the sim in May, however, we think the projected fourth-quarter release date is optimistic. Look for it in the first part of '99. The same release project goes for Empire/Rowan's Korean War sim MIG ALLEY, which was still being shown only in slideshow form

at this year's E3. Another delay is in store for FIGHTER DUEL 2.0 from Infogrames/SPGS, which is now slated for an April 1999 release.

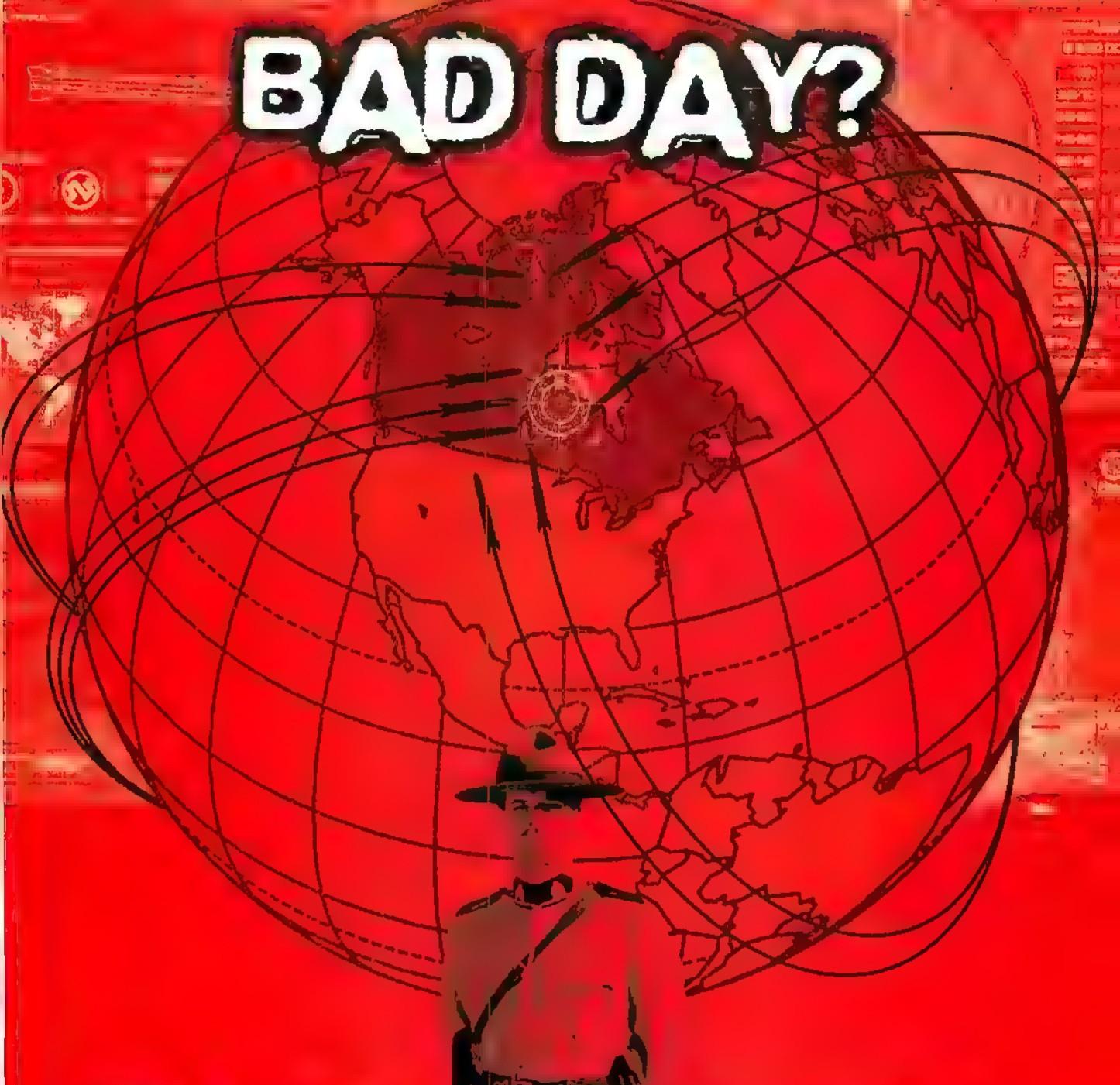
Some World War II sims are still on track, however. SSI's LUFTWAFFE COMMANDER and Microsoft's COMBAT FLIGHT SIMULATOR both look as if they'll make it out before Christmas. MicroProse's long-awaited FALCON 4.0 is finally in the home stretch—we've played a version that's practically feature-complete. Given the complexity of the sim's campaign and multiplayer support, though, it could spend a long time in tuning and debugging. We're not about to make a prediction on its release date, but we will say that MicroProse's claim of a pre-Christmas release is plausible.

Due to space limitations we were forced to omit Jane's ISRAELI AIR COMBAT (formerly ISRAELI AIR FORCE), DID's F-22 ADF, and Novalogic's F-16 VIPER and MIG-29 FULCRUM. You'll find in-depth coverage of those titles in last month's CGW.



LANDING LATE: FIGHTER DUEL 2.0 is getting an infusion of new features, which means it won't be landing on store shelves until Q2 '99.

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SYSTEM REQUIREMENTS:

16MB RAM.

100MB FREE HARD DRIVE SPACE

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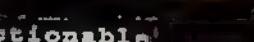
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field agent

Craig Willmores,
Assigned to assist



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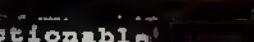
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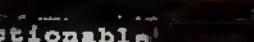
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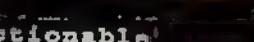
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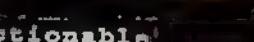
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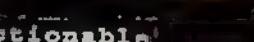
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...and more!



WE'RE KINDA WORRIED...

Ten Products We're Afraid Are Going to Miss the Mark

ULTIMA: ASCENSION

We're worried about Origin's Ultima: Ascension for the same reason we're worried about Ultima: Raguel—it's not really a role-playing game in the sense of Ascension's partners will have a first-person-style view of a male character moving through a full 3D environment. Though the code hasn't yet been optimized, the game play action appears chunky to us, even with minimal characters on the screen. We don't see how it is likely to reach a smooth level by the time it ships. The longer the characters advance in statistics and levels, the faster they accomplish certain tasks of competence, will open up better skill levels. Yet characters will only display the level competence as they actually use it, as opposed to the traditional method of being told you'd moved up in level or seeing a numerical perspective. Furthermore, despite previously announced plans to gum the next Ultimax world in which the "virtues" could hold sway, this one will be a bit more



STARCON

This is Accolade's fourth *STAR CONTROL* game, but the fact that it's missing the "4" after the title is the first indication that this isn't the *STAR CONTROL* we know and love. That *STAR CONTROL* had funny, weird aliens and a rich, albeit sometimes silly, plot. It had lots of adventure-style gameplay with plenty of dialogue; fast, but simple, space shooting action; and lots of warping back and forth between star systems. This *STAR CONTROL*, or *STARCON*, as Accolade wants this franchise renamed, is nothing like that. It's a space sim that looks more

like *WING COMMANDER* than *STAR CONTROL*. Sure, the engine does look really good, but it doesn't deserve the name *STARCON*. Accolade assures us there will be the trademark humor and story, but it appears they've chosen flash over substance, and sacrificed the personality of the original in an attempt to capitalize on the popularity of the space-sim genre.

PEOPLE'S GENERAL

You might think that SSI's *PEOPLE'S GENERAL* would center on the epic struggle of the communists versus the nationalist Chinese in the mid-



20th century—especially since the *PANZER GENERAL* game system is at its best covering WWII. You would be wrong. Instead, this game looks at what might happen in 2005, if the Chinese were to take advantage of the collapse of the Soviet Union. It postulates a Russian-U.S. alliance, and nearly 20 different armies fighting across three dozen scenarios. It also seems more realistic and complex than typical *GENERAL* fare.

All of this could be fun if we get enough high-tech toys with which to wreak havoc in the Far East. But it's hard to escape the feeling that SSI doesn't really know where to take its signature line. Let's hope this isn't *STAR GENERAL* all over again.

TOP GUN: HORNET'S NEST

Okay, we'll be the first to admit that many flight sims are *really* hard-core.



We also realize that, although we like them that way, not everyone wants to get their A.S. in Virtual Aeronautics before jumping into the cockpit. In fact, we'd hate to admit to some of our more hardcore readers how much time we've spent playing simpler sims like *U.S. NAVY FIGHTERS*. But we're afraid *TOP GUN: HORNET'S NEST* goes a bit too far. At E3, the game's designers weren't sure if the flight model was even going to include stalls. Even the much-maligned *SILENT THUNDER A-10* simulation had *stalls*. Beginner modes are fine, but we hope MicroProse includes at least some level of realism for beginners who get intrigued by the genre.



CENTIPEDE

We like the idea of bringing back the games of our youth, but we'd rather see it done through packages such as Microsoft's ARCADE packs or the MAME arcade emulator, which present the games in their original glory. Our first glimpse of Hasbro's CENTIPEDE showed a game that was *inspired* by the original, but didn't play like it. The "classic" mode gave an angled overhead view of the gameworld, sort of like a computer pinball game. This actually detracted from gameplay as compared to the classic 2D version—the 3D seemed to be there only as a checkbox item. And as for the new-style play, it puts you down on the ground looking straight at the mushrooms. Sorry, but we're beginning to look at arcade remakes with the same enthusiasm as we do colorized movies...

ASTEROIDS

We're worried about CENTIPEDE because it screws up the gameplay of the classic game. So you'd think we'd like Activision's ASTEROIDS, right? After all, the gameplay is little changed from the original. The early version we saw at E3 had an overhead view of your ship, with asteroids floating by rendered in lovely 3D. There were some minor

gameplay enhancements, such as ships escorting your fighter through the asteroid field. But, overall, it was the old game with 3D rocks.

DAIKATANA

on Stormi's DAIKATANA isn't as far along as we had hoped, considering that it's slated for



a September ship date. Some of the effects we saw (a demon summoning staff that conjured a transparent monster) were impressive, but we haven't seen enough of the game to judge whether it will meet expectations when it does come out, which we peg at sometime in early 1999. Our recent looks at the engine weren't all that impressive compared to recent fare such as UNREAL.

Given the fixation on graphic flash in this genre, DAIKATANA may be relying on its promising single-player play-with-a-plot to stand out. But what if it does? Software is right in its decision to can QUAKE III, and it turns out plot doesn't matter to fans of 3D-shooters?

gameplay enhancements, such as ships escorting your fighter through the asteroid field. But, overall, it was the old game with 3D rocks.

TARTAN ARMY

Our British counterpart, PC Gaming World, called TARTAN ARMY one of the standouts of the E3 shows. Now they're good blokes over there, and we generally agree with them, but this time there seems to be a culture gap when it comes to this Eidos game. Their take:

"It's a real-time strategy affair set in *Braveheart* territory—and absolutely breathtaking it looks too. From the top-down C&C-style view, the player can zoom right into the thick

of the action, third-person-style, and the power, violence, and authenticity of the skirmish-pitched battles prove terrifically exciting and really do take you beyond into the action—more like into mortal danger. Scarily real." Our take? "Hm. It's *Myth*, with guys in skirts."

MICROSOFT USB SPEAKERS

Competing with Microsoft is about as much fun as a root canal. Just ask Apple, Oracle, Sun, Netscape, CH Products, Logitech, ThrustMaster...the list goes on and on. Well, Micro-Borg has another target market in its sites: speakers. Yes, the people who brought you the ill-conceived Windows Sound System have decided it's time to get in the speaker business. Only these speakers have a new twist: They're designed to replace your sound card. There's audio circuitry that receives audio data from your machine via the USB bus. Now part of this is very intriguing on paper, but as to how Microsoft pulls off the implementation is still an open question. There are two technical downsides immediately

apparent in these speakers: First, if you've got traditional game controllers that connect via your sound card's joystick port, you may not be able to use them once the Microsoft USB sound system is live. Second, wavetable MIDI will use Microsoft's CPU-based DirectX 6.0's synth engine, which will sound pretty good,



but will likely eat CPU cycles for lunch. These might be a good idea for office users, but for gamers, they may not be the way to go.

NEWMAN-HAAS RACING

The formula sounds great. Psygnosis snags the name of the CART team owned by actor/driver Paul Newman for a new racing game. They feature Christian Fittipaldi, Michael Andretti, and 14 other CART drivers. Wrap it all up by licensing the 11 tracks and tossing in commentary from real ABC and ESPN commentators. The problem is,



other than extra cockpit detail and adjustable mirrors, we've seen little here that's not found in the PlayStation version of the game. If we want to play PlayStation games, we'll play them on a PlayStation.

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HEAVY GEAR II

Activision
(310) 255-2000
www.activision.com
Company ETA: Q4 '98
CGW's ETA: Q4 '98.

After the disappointment of the first *HEAVY GEAR* title, you might be surprised to see the sequel heading our list of space simulations. We know we were. But this title has finally thrown out the creaky, patchwork *MECHWARRIOR II* engine and replaced it with a new one built from the ground up. The new engine addresses both the make-up of the *HEAVY GEAR* universe as well as requests and feedback from thousands of *MECHWARRIOR II* and *HEAVY GEAR* players. Look

for a much more "alive" world, with water, lava flows, and other terrain features that will make for more interesting battlefields.

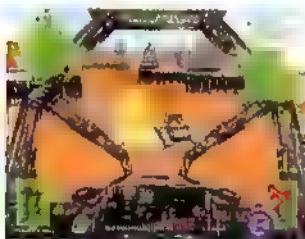
Terrain will also have a greater effect on battles: Your gear will travel faster on a road than it will over grass; faster on grass than on sand. In addition, scaling is more realistic here—buildings and vehicles are more to scale with the Gears, which are giant robots, after all. You won't be able to take out a building with a barrage of laser fire anymore—you'll have to plant an explosive charge on it. The engine is 3D-only (Direct3D and 3Dfx Glide), so look for dazzling effects unhampered by the need to remain compatible with



ancient 2D graphics cards.

The Gears are more intelligent here as well. Activision has spent much more time working on artificial intelligence than it did for previous giant robot titles, and you'll find Gear pilots with a variety of personalities ranging from aggressive to chicken. Your teammates are more useful now—you can plot individual waypoints for

them and you can direct them to attack targets from different directions independent of your actions. Activision designed the game from the ground up for multiplayer play, and strategic buildings such as ammo dumps and repair bays (no floating power-ups here) should make for some interesting attempts at holding territory.



MECHWARRIOR III

MicroProse
(510) 864-0550
www.microprose.com
Company ETA: Q1-Q2 '99
CGW's ETA: Q2 '99

When the news came that FASA's internally developed *MECHWARRIOR III* title was going to become *MECH IV* and a new engine from Zipper Interactive was going to power *MECH III*, many fans worried that the game was going to be a rush-job to capitalize on the license. They're likely to be pleasantly surprised by this game, which takes the basic feature set that made the Activision *MECH* games so popular and adds tactical elements and a more modern engine. New tactical features let you adjust waypoints before a mission and alter objectives during one. You can now create and save up to five weapon groups, which can be tied to two triggers. Resource management,

including real salvage of damaged Mech parts, now plays a part in extended campaigns. The environment is now more interactive: You can walk into water to cool your Mech, or knock an enemy Mech off its feet by blowing a crater beneath it. Gamers who like a wide view will appreciate the ability to target from an external view; traditional cockpit views will also be available. Slated for release in early 1999, this promises to be far more than a stopgap until the FASA-developed *MECH IV*.

STARSIIEGE

Sierra
(425) 449-9800
www.sierra.com
Company ETA: Q4 '98
CGW's ETA: Q4 '98.

While previous games in the *EARTHSIEGE* series were technically impressive, many gamers complained the universe was not as immersive as that of the *MECHWARRIOR* games. Dynamix has responded by commissioning known sci-fi writers to create a thorough story bible for the series. The company's Web site is already packed with fan fiction and user-created skins for the Hercs (giant robots). Multiplayer



action should be strong. Incorporating feedback from a free preview release that's been available for months. Multiplayer mode will include cooperative play and pure

deathmatch modes. For the single player, the easy-to-use 3D mission editor means that there should be dozens of user-created missions to try after the 45-plus in the game. Also welcome is the ability to record both single-player and deathmatch missions—no more "Who killed whom" arguments. If single-player action is as strong as what we've seen in multiplayer, nobody will be tagging this series as a *MECHWARRIOR* wannabe.

IN THE WORKS

STAR TREK: KLINGON ACADEMY is Interplay's sequel to *STARFLEET ACADEMY*. Featuring Christopher Plummer as General Chang (from *Star Trek VI: The Undiscovered Country*).

KLINGON ACADEMY puts you in the shoes of a Klingon cadet. Much of it should be action-oriented and involve plenty of shooting, since you're playing the Klingons. Look for ion storms, asteroid fields, and nebula battles to spice things up. While the first game in this series had wonderful missions with true *Trek* flavor, the fighterlike combat disappointed us. When we get at the helm we'll report on whether these ships handle like battlecruisers. It's slated to beam onto shelves in October.

Sierra Studios is developing a game based on *Babylon 5*, and we were impressed with the few minutes we got at the stick of a *Star Fury* in multiplayer mode at E3. The game sounds promising: *B5* creator Joe Straczynski is supervising the script, and the engine uses polygon-reduced versions of the actual models used in the show. Sierra promises a strong tactical element in addition to the action. Look for it in the first half of 1999.



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CREATURES 2

Mindsight
(800) 234-3088
www.creatures.co.uk
Company ETA: Q3 '98
CGW's ETA: Q3 '98

Those lovable little Norns are back in Cyberlife's *CREATURES 2*, the greatly evolved sequel to last year's life simulation, *CREATURES*. In this version, the new virtual world is more than twice the size of the old one and the artificial-life technology has been developed even further. The new breed of Norns is more advanced biologically and behaviorally—a new Norn's brain AI is 85 percent more effective at storing neuroconcepts, allowing it to absorb and apply the things it learns.

The Norns' complex internal system is made up of eight

different organs and there are 15 different chemicals in each Norn's digestive system. Whereas before your Norn could have been on its deathbed before you realized that something was wrong with it, this time you are given some warning. Since each Norn possesses twice

as many genes and organs, it is also much easier to pinpoint exactly how and why your poor pet died. The gap between user and creature definitely closes up in this new version.

The new Norns have more personality, a dramatically expanded vocabulary, and 120 facial expressions. A complete virtual ecosystem, including weather and sea-

sons, will affect your Norns' health and actions, and Cyberlife is even looking into the possibility of adding natural disasters, such as earthquakes and tornadoes. The new world is filled with animation—each area houses countless plants and animals—and there will be plenty of exciting new toys to keep your Norns amused. For those who were

overwhelmed by the complexity of the first game, *CREATURES 2* offers a new, more user-friendly interface. The game can be played on many different levels—you can immediately plunge yourself right in and explore all the technological enhancements, or you can have fun easing yourself into the game gradually.



SMART GAMES CHALLENGE #3

Smart Games/Hasbro
(800) 683-5847
www.smartgames.com
Company ETA: Q3 '98
CGW's ETA: Q4 '98

Smart Games will soon be back with another collection of mind-boggling brain teasers, and now, the company has puzzle giant Hasbro backing it up. SMART GAMES CHALLENGE #3 features 20 all-new puzzle types, including word problems, sound puzzles, action games, and traditional puzzles. You have Meteor

Mayhem (probably the only asteroids game that relies on brain power, not reflexes); Rock, Paper, Scissors, a logic problem based on the old schoolyard game; Sheep Dog, your chance to uncover those hidden shepherding skills as you guide your flock across a hexagonal grid; and many more. Although Smart Games has always put content ahead of looks in its products, this time the developers are revamping the game's image, so expect improved graphics, better sound, and 3D animation. That's not to say that they will skimp on gameplay: As usual, there will be

hundreds of different skill levels, ensuring that CHALLENGE #3 will appeal to both novices and brainiacs alike.

GUBBLE 2

Actual Entertainment
(408) 654-7950
www.actualentertainment.com
Company ETA: Q3 '98
CGW's ETA: Q3 '98



The cute little alien Gubble D. Gleep is back—and this time he's got legs! Whereas before, Gubble traveled around in his space-pod, now he can run, jump, duck, and fly. GUBBLE 2 includes 104 new levels, plus hidden bonus levels, spread across

five worlds—
Waste Land,
Cave Land,
Water
World,
Lava Land,
and Quartz

Land. While the style of gameplay remains similar to the previous version—you help Gubble to fit screws into screwdrivers and drills into rivets—the puzzles are more intricate. On one level, you can turn Gubble into a ball; another requires you to use decoy Gubbles. Some levels feature poison-shooting cannons that will slow you down, shrink you,

take away your ability to jump, or even change your directional keys, so that when you try to walk forward you'll actually move backward, and so forth. Gamers who like arcade-style puzzle games should find these new challenges engrossing.

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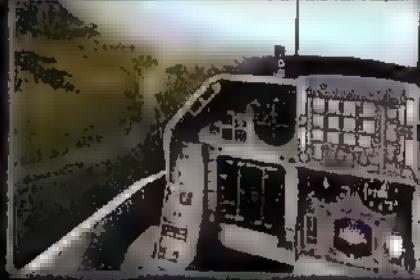
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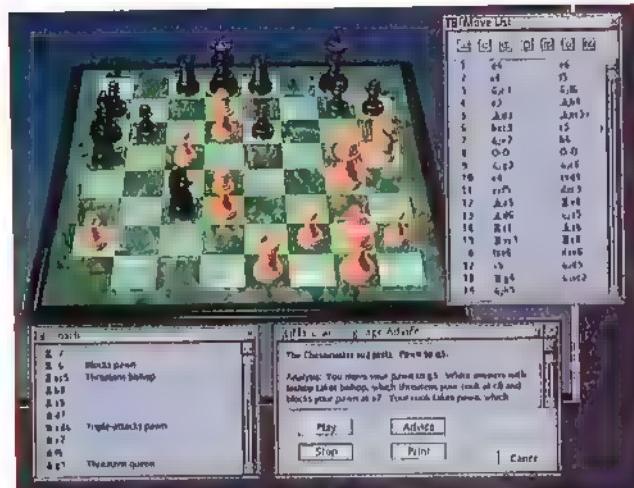
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CHESSMASTER 6000

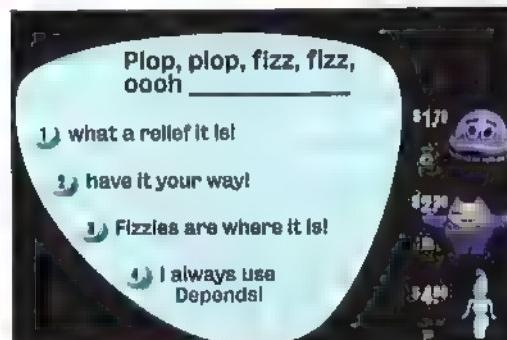
Mindscape
(800) 234-3088
www.mindscape.com
Company ETA: Q3 '98
CGW's ETA: Q4 '98

CHESSMASTER has been almost as far ahead of its pawn-pushing competition as NBA LIVE has been for PC basketball. But it's finally being challenged, which is a good thing: Promised features in recent versions failed to materialize or didn't meet the sky-high expectations of the game's many fans. Along with the customary graphical and engine upgrade, CHESSMASTER 6000 will attempt to accurately rate your performance, support PGN (portable game notation) standards, and try to regain its dominance in chess tutorials. It also boasts a bevy of new AI personalities—ones that normal humans can beat—to go along

with the tough computer opponents based on legendary grandmasters. Let's hope these enhancements aren't as fleeting as one of Bobby Fischer's comebacks.

DON'T TOUCH THAT DIAL

Berkeley Systems
(800) 234-3088
www.berksys.com
Company ETA: Q4 '98
CGW's ETA: Q4 '98



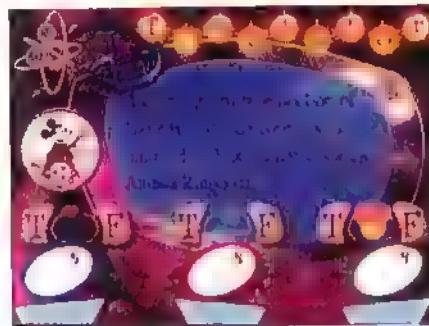
Building on the huge success of its You DON'T KNOW JACK product line, Berkeley Systems is working on another quiz show game. DON'T TOUCH THAT DIAL allows true couch potatoes to finally put that mine of useless information to use. The game requires that you to dig up from the annals of memory everything you've ever heard about commercial products, testing your knowledge about decades of advertising trivia.

Fill in the Brand questions ask you to recall phrases, slogans, and jingles from the commercials of yesteryear, while Birth of a Nation quizzes you on the rise and fall of your favorite products. Although the game sounds promising, it's worth noting that this is the first trivia product that Berkeley Systems has attempted without the cooperation of Jellyvision. Whether Berkeley can maintain

the same level of style, humor, and talent that made the JACK series a hit remains to be seen.

THE D SHOW

Disney
(800) 900-9234
www.disneyinteractive.com
Company ETA: Q3 '98
CGW's ETA: Q3 '98



Aimed not just toward kids but to Disney fans of all ages, this You DON'T KNOW JACK-style quiz show tests players' knowledge of all things Disney. Questions are based on the animated and live-action films, the television specials, the music, the theme parks, and other general Disney trivia, such as "What is Donald's middle name?"

Gameplay follows the same format as that of JACK: Up to three players can compete on one keyboard to score D-Bucks. The game features over 1,000 questions, with question types ranging from basic multiple choice to true-or-false 'D-FIBulator' statements. THE D SHOW also includes 60 bonus rounds, plus a huge assortment of video clips. The tone of the game is very family-oriented, but the questions, which span the whole Disney history, are far from juvenile.

IN THE WORKS

Tribe fans will be happy to hear that a fourth installment of You DON'T KNOW JACK is in the works and Berkeley Systems has teamed up again with Jellyvision to produce HEADRUSH, another quiz-show game in the same vein as JACK, but aimed specifically to a teen audience. HEADRUSH incorporates all the attitude and humor of the JACK series, with questions that are more accessible to the youth of today. The star of HEADRUSH is a sarcastic, no-holds-barred host, who is slightly

more hip, but no less forgiving than his predecessors. The game host's style is similar to JACK's (but with fewer sexual references and more flatulation). HEADRUSH features plenty of cool animation, including cartoon segments that introduce each question, humorous commercials for imaginary sponsors, and a high-octane soundtrack.

Hasbro continues to dominate the puzzle genre with a slew of products set for release before the end of the year. After leading the boardgame-to-computer game movement

and cornering the arcade-game conversion market, it seems only natural that the company's next endeavor would be to bring two of television's most popular quiz shows from the tube to our monitors. Hasbro's PC editions of WHEEL OF FORTUNE and JEOPARDY look to be improvements over the previous electronic versions of the games we've seen. Both are due out in the fall. Hasbro is also working on PC versions of OUTBURST, LIFE, and STRATEGO, all of which should be available before the end of the year.

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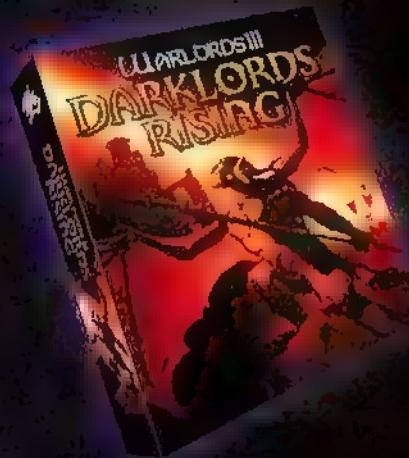
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Look deep, deep into me,
Because I have nothing else to show you.

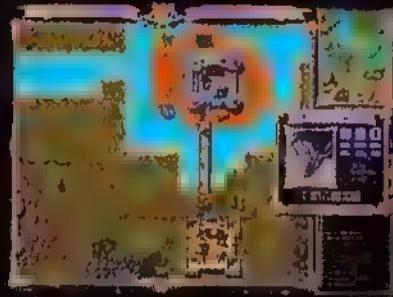
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And malice.



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In short, more adventure, deeper gameplay and fewer chances for survival.



WARLORDS III
**DARKLORDS
RISING**



HOMEWORLD

Sierra Studios
(425) 649-9800
www.sierra.com
Company ETA: Q4 '98
CGW's ETA: Q1 '99

The most promising game of this season is the real-time space strategy extravaganza HOMEWORLD, from the fledgling company Relic. Leave it to a start-up to introduce a breath of fresh air into the strategy genre.

The most significant feature of HOMEWORLD is its true 3D engine. The engine renders everything in real-time 3D, from the ships you control to the nebulae in the background. This allows for an unprecedented level of freedom in both the camera and viewing options, as well as the gameplay. You can rotate the camera 360 degrees to get the best view of

the expansive 3D battlefield. You can zoom in to see the markings on a tiny fighter or zoom out to see your mass of fighters and capital ships meld into an amorphous bubble amid the beautiful backdrop of gas clouds and nebulae.

There will be resource gathering, as in other real-time strategy games, but the resource nodes will provide more strategic possibilities: You'll even be able to sabotage them to prevent your enemies from using them. The tactical possibilities in the game will be vast. There will be two sides to play, each with its own look and unique ships. Regardless of the side you choose, you'll command gunboats, fighters, carriers, battleships, massive floating cannons, research vessels, and many other ship types. The extra



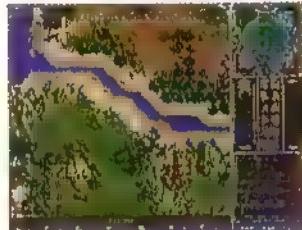
bells and whistles in the game are also impressive, including transparent clouds, engine glow, and hundreds of lines of context-sensitive voiceovers.

The single-player game will be a story-driven campaign with plenty of aliens to encounter.

Relic hopes to create a movie-like experience to complement and drive the outstanding gameplay. It's an ambitious plan, but all signs point to success. Read more about HOMEWORLD in our full preview on page 62 of this issue.

HEROES OF MIGHT & MAGIC III

3DO
(650) 261-3000
www.3do.com
Company ETA: Q4 '98
CGW's ETA: Late Q4 '98



Get ready for the third HEROES installment. While the engine and graphics are getting only minor polishing, the gameplay just keeps getting bigger. There will now be eight castle types, 16 heroes, more than 100 different monsters (and each monster has an upgraded version), and hundreds of spells and artifacts. Towns will have a more detailed economic model, including buildings that will add bonuses to your mine production.

The tactical display is getting

bigger, and there will be a wait button for your troops. Artifacts are getting a slight facelift, as well. You have to equip your artifacts on a paper doll, so no more stacking five swords or flails. The map editor will also be improved, with the ability to rename heroes and towns. Lastly, multiplayer is being fixed so you can move the map, fiddle with troops and towns, and not sit idle when it's not your turn.

COMMAND & CONQUER: TIBERIAN SUN

Westwood
(702) 228-4040
www.westwood.com
Company ETA: Q4 '98
CGW's ETA: Q4 '98

TIBERIAN SUN, Westwood's true sequel to COMMAND & CONQUER, takes place a few years after the first C&C, and pits the NOD against the GDI for



round two of world domination. At first glance, TIBERIAN SUN might not look like a huge improvement over C&C, but it is. The terrain is prerendered 3D, like TOTAL ANNIHILATION's, but it's more interactive. You'll be able to blow up bridges, warp terrain, and freeze water in order to cross rivers. Also, because the perspective will be three-quarters, instead of top-down, you'll be able to appreciate TIBERIAN SUN's 3D terrain much more than that of TA.

The units in TIBERIAN SUN will be voxels (3D pixels), so they'll look more real and move more fluidly. Expect more differentiation between the two sides' units. The NOD will maintain its hit-and-run philosophy, while the GDI will get an infusion of much-needed personality.

There will also be night missions, enhanced tech trees, and more improvements that should take the C&C franchise to the next level.

SID MEIER'S ALPHA CENTAURI

Electronic Arts
(800) 245-4525
www.ea.com
Company ETA: Q3 '98
CGW's ETA: Q4 '98

Firaxis' latest game attempts to be much more than Civ II in space, and not just by employing a 3D rise to the mountains. Now, in addition to mining raw materials, you must harvest energy via solar collectors. Ebony obelisks—shades of



2001: A Space Odyssey—dot the alien landscape and serve as unwelcome beacons for the native life-forms.

In a departure from Civ and MASTER OF ORION, the decidedly hard-core science-fiction tech tree extrapolates from modern scientific knowledge to show us the scarier edge of bioengineering, and it balances that with the Calculus of Ethics—Sir Isaac Newton would be proud. In addition to the pursuit of knowledge, you may try to either live in harmony with the alien environment or introduce Terran flora and fauna in an attempt to make this world over in Earth's image. For more information on the game, check out our full sneak preview on page 54 of this issue.

**MYTH II:
SOULBLIGHTER**

Bungie
(800) 295-0060
www.bungie.com
Company ETA: Q4 '98
CGW's ETA: Q4 '98

MYTH blew us away with its innovation and earned our 1997 Strategy Game of the Year award. However, it wasn't perfect. With MYTH II, the company hopes to fix what little was wrong with the original and deliver more of what gamers loved.

2001: A Space Odyssey—dot the alien landscape and serve as unwelcome beacons for the native life-forms.

In a departure from Civ and MASTER OF ORION, the decidedly hard-core science-fiction tech tree extrapolates from modern scientific knowledge to show us the scarier edge of bioengineering, and it balances that with the Calculus of Ethics—Sir Isaac Newton would be proud. In addition to the pursuit of knowledge, you may try to either live in harmony with the alien environment or introduce Terran flora and fauna in an attempt to make this world over in Earth's image. For more information on the game, check out our full sneak preview on page 54 of this issue.

While this game isn't a huge leap over MYTH, it does contain many tweaks and enhancements. The engine is definitely being polished. There will be 3D flames to scorch the landscape and burn trees, moving shadows, smoother reflections in water, ambient life-forms to add to the realism, and 3D positional sound. The engine will also support Direct3D.

Gameplay is being enhanced with a more involved magic system and new units. Extra levels of "zooming out" have been added to provide greater field of vision, and unit pathfinding has been improved. Bungie is also determined to add indoor missions, fortifications, and castle sieges.



and buildings are all new. Teutonic knights will replace heavy cavalry, and crossbowmen will replace archers. Many of the civs—like the British, Franks, and Saracens—are new, although some favorites, such as the Chinese and Japanese, will return.

Ensemble will add group formations and facing; a more realistic economic model; and roving, playable barbarians (think Mongols and Celts). The single-player game will be much more robust, with historical campaigns (including the Crusades) and more involved missions. The design specs for AGE II are very ambitious, and we've included only some of the many improvements. For a great, in-depth preview of AGE II, read our July issue cover story.

**AGE OF
EMPIRES II**

Microsoft
(425) 882-8080
www.ensemble.com
Company ETA: Q2 '99
CGW's ETA: Q2 '99

Now that AGE OF EMPIRES II has been pushed back to a spring '99 release, Ensemble Studios will have more time to make good on its promised improvements. AGE II will span from the Dark Ages to the Renaissance, with the four ages being: Dark, Feudal, Castle, and Imperial. The artwork, units,

tweaks, and 3D graphics should elevate this game above the norm.

Unlike those in TOTAL ANNIHILATION, FORCE COMMANDER's graphics will be full real-time 3D, with support for 3D acceleration. This will provide more flexible viewing options and give the game a more realistic look.

While you'll acquire troops in

**FORCE
COMMANDER**

LucasArts
(415) 472-3400
www.lucasarts.com
Company ETA: Q4 '98
CGW's ETA: Q1 '99

FORCE COMMANDER should succeed where REBELLION failed: pleasing Star Wars fans and strategy gamers. As the Alliance or Empire commander, you command troops through a series of ground-based missions spread throughout familiar Star Wars locales, including Hoth, Yavin 4, and Tatooine.

Unlike REBELLION, FORCE COMMANDER's gameplay is more in line with traditional RTS games like COMMAND & CONQUER and STARCRAFT. However, while gameplay will be the familiar "explore, gather, build, and destroy" variety, the Star Wars flavor, gameplay



regular real-time strategy fashion, the arsenal at your disposal will be every Star Wars junkie's dream: stormtroopers, droids, AT-ATs, snowspeeders, TIE bombers, Y-wings, and AT-ST walkers. Look for a more in-depth preview in an upcoming issue of CGW.

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MECHCOMMANDER

MicroProse
(510) 864-4550
www.microprose.com
Company ETA: Q3 '98
CGW's ETA: Q3 '98



Unlike the other strategy titles in this roundup, MicroProse's MECHCOMMANDER, based in the *BattleTech* universe, is more tactical in focus. As the commander of Zulu Squadron, you have to take Port Arthur from the technologically superior Smoke Jaguar clan.

With its narrow scope (you never command more than a

dozen mechs), MECHCOMMANDER is able to provide more detailed and realistic gameplay. Mechs will be expertly animated, with frames for limping, jumping, and

running. Facing, true line-of-sight, and interactive 3D terrain will play a very large part in combat.

While there is no resource gathering in the game's linear campaign, there is resource management. You'll have to scavenge parts and weapons from the battlefield to upgrade and equip your mechs. You'll also have to manage your team of MechWarriors, who have distinct personalities and abilities, and who gain experience with each mission.

With a rich universe to draw upon and a narrow focus that enables a more detailed engine, MECHCOMMANDER is shaping up to be an excellent tactical introduction to the *BattleTech* universe.

**POPULOUS III:
THE BEGINNING**

Electronic Arts
(800) 245-4525
www.bullfrog.ea.com
Company ETA: Q4 '98
CGW's ETA: Q1 '99

Although we can criticize Bullfrog for dragging its feet with POPULOUS III, we can't denounce the gameplay. It's still looking as good as it did when it was called THE THIRD

COMING. Along with the name change, Bullfrog has added 3D acceleration and a new storyline.

Instead of being the sequel to *Populous II*, this game now serves as the prequel to all the *POPULOUS* games. You still play a shaman, but the game now assumes that in this *POPULOUS* prehistory, there are no gods, just dueling shamans fighting to become the god we would play in later *POPULOUS* games. As a shaman, you must battle through 30 levels in six worlds and eliminate your rivals before you can claim divinity.

You'll still convert wildmen into your subjects, order them to construct buildings, train them to become soldiers, and call down spectacular spells to deform the terrain and weaken your enemy's resolve. And the engine is still good-looking and flexible, with multiple planet views and a fully rotatable camera.

**TOTAL
ANNIHILATION:
KINGDOMS**

CaveDog
(425) 486-9258
www.cavedog.com
Company's ETA: Q1 '99
CGW's ETA: Q2 '99

For many gamers, TOTAL ANNIHILATION was the winner of the 1997 real-time wars. With 3D terrain and dozens of units, it captured the attention of many real-time gamers tired of wading through all the bad clones. Although Chris Taylor, the creator of TA, has left CaveDog, the team that remains is hoping to inject more gameplay, creativity, and personality into the TOTAL ANNIHILATION franchise.

First, there will be four sides, split among the four elements of Earth, Wind, Water, and Fire. A classic

fantasy plot will drive the four campaigns and tell a story of world destruction and salvation.

There will be just as many units as in TA, but these troops will have more fantastic abilities and engage the imagination of fantasy lovers. There will be castle sieges, as well as open-field battles. Magic should also come into play, spicing up the combat. There are additional features that CaveDog is keeping secret, but the team is determined to pour on the gameplay and make KINGDOMS even more engaging than TOTAL ANNIHILATION.

**BLACK AND
WHITE**

Electronic Arts
(800) 245-4525
www.lionhead.co.uk
Company's ETA: Q2 '99
CGW's ETA: Q3 '99

If you've ever wanted to be a giant monster like Godzilla, visiting terror upon peaceful villages, this is your game. BLACK AND WHITE will be the first game developed at Peter Molyneux's new Lionhead Studios.



You play a powerful sorcerer, capable of shaping world events. As you start out, happy villagers scurry about the lush, hilly landscape. But the good times can't last, since you need worshipers to increase your power, and that means disturbing the once-perfect world. To motivate your subjects, you can smack them around or perform "click & flick" spell-casting. You can also pick up creatures and breed them in a genetic crucible. Hybrid creatures can

grow to gigantic proportions, you can then loose them on the members of competing cultures. You'll be able to switch views and witness the destruction first hand. We can't wait to see how much fun stomping villagers will be.

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BIRTH OF THE FEDERATION

MicroProse
(800) 695-4263
www.microprose.com
Company ETA: Q4 '98
CGW's ETA: Q4 '98

Dissolve a little *Civ* base in MOO, dust with STARS, simmer in a big Picard pot, and you have MicroProse's recipe for success. *BIRTH OF THE FEDERATION*—which chronicles the rise of all the various *Next Generation* civilizations from the early, halting beginnings of warp drive—should go down as the best *Trek* game ever, regardless of genre. It's certainly the most playable product from MicroProse in years.

Like the famed TV series, everything works despite the obvious

quirks. The Vulcans are logical, the Klingons militaristic, the Ferengi aggressively economic. Diplomacy, Wonders of the Galaxy, multi-player action—it's all here. The turn-based combat system even supports 3D cards. For more on this game, check out our sneak preview in CGW #166.

CHAOS GATE

SSI
(415) 895-2000
www.ssionline.com
Company ETA: Q3 '98
CGW's ETA: Q3 '98

Despite some decent attempts, the definitive PC Warhammer game has yet to arrive. That should change with *CHAOS GATE*, which vividly recreates the bizarre world of Space

Marines and their even stranger foes in an X-COM style turn-based format. Not only do the missions seem exotic and varied, there are also definite RPG elements as your squad develops during the scripted campaign. More than three dozen Warhammer 40,000 weapons make an appearance, some as "prize elements" à la *FANTASY GENERAL*, and there are more

than 20 Psyker spells featured as well. All of the Games Workshop touches, from the steampunk vehicles to Terminator Squads and even battlefield chaplains, are perfectly sculpted amid a haunting gothic sci-fi backdrop. It's the next best thing to having hundreds of Warhammer miniatures on your desktop—without having to paint them all.



RAILROAD TYCOON 2

Pop Top Software
www.poptopsoftware.com
Company ETA: Q3 '98
CGW's ETA: Q4 '98



Phil Steinmeyer is a lot like the author Peter David: He does his best work in other creators' worlds. Now, the man who helped show the industry there was still plenty of life in turn-based games with *HEROES OF MIGHT & MAGIC* goes cerebral real-time with *RAILROAD TYCOON II*. The design retains most of what made Sid Meier's original design great, but Steinmeyer has added stronger AI robber barons, more strategic variety, and 16-player multiplayer support. The 3D graphics don't require an accelerator, but they still look good. You

can micromanage your business, immerse yourself in stock trading, or hire managers to do the dirty work—leaving you to play with your virtual train set. Deeper and more accessible than the original, this is one of the true sleepers of 1998.

IN THE WORKS

DARK REIGN II is also in development, but it won't ship until the fall of 1999 at the earliest. It is getting a complete overhaul, including a true, real-time 3D engine. The enhanced engine will retain *DARK REIGN*'s AI (with improvements, of course), but add true line of sight, interactive terrain, and more realistic gameplay. All units will be 3D, including the infantry. Expect near unlimited zoom and a fully rotatable camera.

CAESAR III is set to release later this year, and continues the city simulation gameplay of *CAESAR II*, while abstracting the combat significantly. This is more a *SIMCITY*, urban-planning game than an empire simulation, although there will be citizens to manage and

barbarians to repel. *CAESAR III* should ship by the end of this year.

Westwood's classic, *DUNE II*, will resurface this summer as *DUNE 2000*, an update with SVGA graphics and movie-quality cut-scenes with professional actors, including John Rhys Davies. The campaigns and gameplay are pretty much the same, except for the addition of one or two new units. *DUNE II* fans will want to play this for the multiplayer support!

STARCRAFT: BROTHERHOOD OF BLADES, the expansion set to the phenomenal *STARCRAFT*, will come out sometime this fall. Blizzard says it will be September, but we're not holding our breath. It will include two new units per side, three new tile sets, and three new campaigns. See our minipreview in this month's News Section.

MORE PRIZE MONEY
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AMD

PGL
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To Danny "Rosco" Alires and Sean "Hawk3" Flanagan on their triumphs at the Advent Championships of the AMD PGL! The Season 2 live finale event showcased the talents of 16 of North America's top gamers. With



thousands of EG attendees and press from all over the world looking on, Rosco took the Quake II title and Hawk3 came out on top in the Total Annihilation competition. Season 3 promises to be even more exciting. Visit the PGL web site for details.



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will award \$20,000 in cash and more than \$15,000 in prizes to the top Starcraft players!

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The Advent Championships of the AMD PGL provided the greatest spectacle at this year's E3. Here's a photo-journal of the Season 2 Finals.



PGL SEASON 2 FINALISTS GATHER for a group photo following the Championships. (Pictured left to right: Standing: Boogieman, Freak, Makeveli, Kill4lols, unowned, Rascoe, Rasta the announcer, JetLink, CViper, Aling, Butcher7, Nodrules, Hawk3, Sittin, Kuin, Slicksoul, Ren, Icewolf)



CROWDS GAZE IN WONDER as the action unfolds during the Advent Championships of the AMD PGL at E3.



PGL FINALISTS PREPARE for their next match by warming up in the official practice area.



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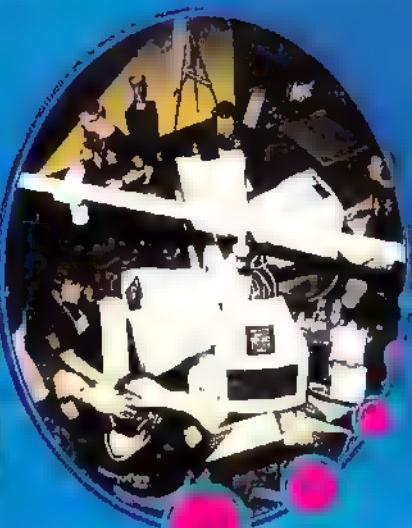
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Bushnell, as id Software's
Todd Hollenshead and a
Fortune magazine
reporter look on.

SEAN "Hawkeye" FLANAGAN (second from left) here receives
\$7,500 first-place prize from PGL Commissioner Nolan
Bushnell for winning the strategy category, as GiveDog
and InterAct officials look on.



YOUTH AND REFLEXES OVERCOME EXPERIENCE
as Thrash beat PGL Commissioner Nolan Bushnell in
a no-holds barred "Celebrity Pong DeathMatch."



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The PGL Web Site: CYBER "SPORTS CENTRAL"

Whether you're among the elite players competing in the PGL or just a casual gamer, or only want to watch, the one web site you oughta bookmark is www.pgl.com, home base for the Professional Gamers' League. Stats, standings, schedules, profiles, box scores, game summaries, downloadable demos, highlight reels — it's all here.

The screenshots show the PGL website's homepage and a specific scoreboard page. The homepage features a large banner asking 'Are You a Control Freak?' with a yellow button. Below are links for 'About the PGL', 'Features', 'Registration', 'Press Center', and 'Sponsors'. The scoreboard page has a similar layout with a banner for 'Who says power has to come with a price?' and links for 'About the PGL', 'Team Standings', 'Registration', 'Press Center', and 'Sponsors'.

WWW.PGL.COM



Sign Up Now! www.pgl.com

AXIS & ALLIES

Hasbro Interactive
(508) 921-3700
www.hasbro.com
Company ETA: Q3 '98
CGW's ETA: Q3 '98

Hasbro is more up-and-down than the stock market these days: For every RISK! or SCRABBLE on the PC, there's a PICTORIAL to make you long for the days when games shipped on floppies (at least they could be reformatted). All this should change with the advent of AXIS & ALLIES, from Meyer-Glass Interactive. This is easily Hasbro's best Windows design since MONOPOLY, and it's potentially one of the big hits—regardless of genre—of '98.

AXIS & ALLIES is the quintessential beer-and-prezels war-game, offering a grander scope (and even more fun) than do

PANZER GENERAL and CLASH OF STEEL. Despite its abstractions, AXIS & ALLIES quaintly illustrates the major themes of WWII. The game begins in early 1942, at the peak of Axis success, where Germany and Japan must press hard for a strategic victory before the Industrial might of the U.S. swings the tide in the Allies' favor. Along the way, you defend Karelia and China, try to bomb Britain out of the war, coordinate amphibious assaults, and research high-tech weapons like jet fighters and V-2 rockets.

One of the secrets to *Axis & Allies*' boardgame success has been that it easily accommodates optional rules. The computer version not only updates the map (ending those arguments about how many moves it takes to get through Panama),



it also lets you toggle everything from factory output to the number of hits battleships take before they sink.

Despite the rumors you may have heard, *Axis & Allies* is not in real-time; it doesn't need to be. Whether you contest for the world's dominance alone or in

multiplayer mode, the pace is brisk, and Hasbro plans to support every kind of multiplayer option from Internet and LAN to email, with optional time limits for each turn. If the development team retains its focus, look for this to be well worth the 14-year wait.



BATTLE OF BRITAIN

TalonSoft
(800) 211-6504
www.talonsoft.com
Company ETA: Q4 '98
CGW's ETA: Q4 '98

The core of BATTLE OF BRITAIN is essentially Gary Grigsby's venerable USAF from the old Apple II/C-64 days, with the advantage of a more dynamic situation. The gameplay gives you less detailed tactical combat than

does Avalon Hill's ACHTUNG! SPITFIRE, but it gives you much more control over how to fight the campaign.

As the Germans, you can launch up to 100 Luftwaffe raids each day, choosing your time, altitude, escorts, and pathways to the more than 300 targets. Defending as the British is challenging, because you never have enough of those terrific aircraft, your best pilots are always fatigued, and... Well, you get the picture.

As one would expect from a TalonSoft game, every fighter, recon, bomber, pilot, and historical target from the battle is included. Extras include modeling of leaders and an optional 1941 campaign—plus, it's fun to watch Grigsby being pulled kicking and screaming into Windows 95 gaming.

MEDIEVAL

HPS/Incredible Simulations
(408) 554-8381
www.hpsims.com
Company ETA: Q2 '98
CGW's ETA: Q3 '98

Incredible Simulations, the REMEMBER THE ALAMO! folks, are at it again, this time with MEDIEVAL, a comprehensive, tactical look at field warfare in the Dark Ages. It features knights on horseback, shield walls, and stout yeoman with deadly yew bows. And if you happen to run

out of arrows, MEDIEVAL models just about every obscure polearm or bladed weapon; you can even hurl rocks.

The 10 to 12 scenarios planned for the final release include such famous battles as Bannockburn—for all of you *Braveheart* fans out there—Stanford Bridge, and Hastings. And if your favorite obscure battle from the Wars of the Roses doesn't make the cut, just build your own with the campaign editor. By combining the improved interface from ZULU WAR with the tactical richness of Incredible Simulations' earlier games, MEDIEVAL should be the company's biggest hit yet.





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FIGHTING STEEL

SSI
(800) 245-4525
www.ssionline.com
Company ETA: Q4 '98
CGW's ETA: Q4 '98

FIGHTING STEEL lets you relive famous naval surface engagements of WWII—no aircraft carriers here—in a game that sails far beyond GREAT NAVAL BATTLES. The wide variety of destructive hardware from the more than 90 ship classes includes everything from 18-inch guns to "Long Lance" torpedoes. While FIGHTING STEEL is a real-time wargame (you play primarily from a command perspective), it also allows you to get intimate with your gorgeous vessels (you'll want

a hot 3D accelerator card for this one) and micromanage to your heart's content.

The four campaigns (both Axis and Allied) show the usual deft SSI touch, but it's likely that the multiplay options will spark the most interest. Scenarios run from 30 minutes to an hour—perfect for sinking the *Graf Spee* during a lunch break.

FLEET COMMAND

Jane's Combat Simulations
(415) 571-7171
www.janes.ca.com
Company ETA: Q3 '99
CGW's ETA: Q1 '99

You may have heard the rumor that Jane's was working on an Aegis guided-

missile destroyer simulation to complement its 688i submarine simulation. During development, that rumored sim evolved into FLEET COMMAND, which gives you command of an entire carrier battle group. You can direct each of the battle group's assets using a simple point-and-click interface—imagine the naval weapons systems for HARPOON controlled by an interface that's only a little more complex than that of COMMAND AND CONQUER. You can set ship actions, and even command individual aircraft to patrol or

gamers consider this series a little dated now, it's still the best for simulating 19th-century combat. In this edition, the Confederacy is against the wall as it launches the last great Rebel offensive, backed by Longstreet's veterans from Lee's Army of Northern Virginia.

Unlike in SID MEIER'S GETTYSBURG, the BATTLEGROUND system does let you fight an entire Civil War battle at once, in addition to numerous small engagements—of which there are plenty to be had near Chickamauga, also known as the "river of blood."



intercept targets. Naval vessels for a wide variety of countries are modeled, so you can set up a conflict around India as easily as one on the Black Sea. Although it's a strategic simulation, it uses the graphics engine from FIGHTER LEGENDS, so you'll be able to view the consequences of your orders on an impressive 3D display.

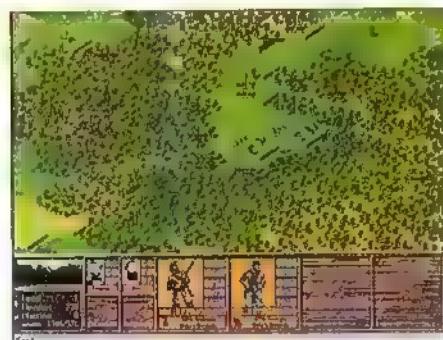
BATTLEGROUND 9: CHICKAMAUGA

TalonSoft
(800) 211-6504
www.talonsoft.com
Company ETA: Q3 '98
CGW's ETA: Q4 '98

The most successful wargame series comes back for a limited PC engagement, which is only available direct from TalonSoft. Although many

Chickamauga isn't the most famous battle of the Civil War, but the Confederate and Union forces are very evenly matched, which makes this a great situation for a wargame. As usual, the emphasis is on morale and command control, and you may toggle the latter to help you learn the system.

In addition to the full-motion video of Civil War reenactments, CHICKAMAUGA sports a spiffy new 32-bit engine. So, if this is a modest hit, you have to wonder: Could there be a BATTLEGROUND 10?



IN THE WORKS

With all its other high-profile projects, it would be easy to miss TalonSoft's WEST FRONT. But we saw several improvements, not the least of which was the much faster speed of the game's engine from that of EAST FRONT. The big gun on the horizon is HARPOON 4 from SSI, which boasts full cooperation from Larry Bond, the best-selling author and designer of the paper Harpoon game. There's no way this will ship before the summer of 1999,

however, and it could possibly be as late as fall '99. Strategy First's MAN OF WAR II proceeds apace with a simpler interface. It looks to be a lot more fun in multiplayer mode than was the original, though it still lacks D3D support. Interactive Magic is working on another GREAT BATTLES title, this one by S. Craig Taylor, on the Civil War. It will not use the engine from AMERICAN CIVIL WAR. The rumored GREAT BATTLES game on samurai in Japan was simply that—a rumor, evidently begun by fans of the period.

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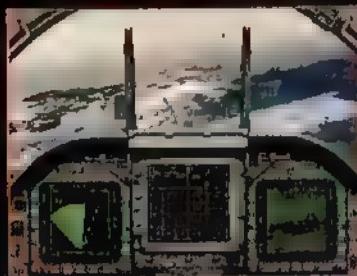


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LOGITECH WINGMAN FORCE



Wingman Force
Logitech
(510) 795-8500
www.logitech.com
Company ETA: Q4 '98
CGW's ETA: Q4 '98

The Wingman Force is leading the wave of third-generation force feedback devices. Make no mistake, this is a *big* stick; it takes up more desk space than the year-old Sidewinder Force Feedback Pro from Microsoft. However, the placement of buttons and throttle slider on the unit makes for a natural two-handed stance—one hand

on the stick, the other resting on the base with throttle and programmable buttons in easy reach.

The Wingman Force is fully DirectInput compatible and uses Immersion's I-Force 2.0 technology, which is widely supported. The stick supports frequencies up to 250Hz, allowing for much more subtle effects: Gone are the sledgehammer machine gun recoils—unless the game developer intends it.

The Wingman Force can connect to your system via either serial cable or USB.

KENWOOD Z40X CD-ROM DRIVE

Zen Research
(408) 863-2767
www.tenresearch.com
Company ETA: Q3 '98
CGW's ETA: Q3 '98

Sometimes less is more; such is definitely the case with the Kenwood 42x CD-ROM drive. The drive incorporates Zen Research's "TrueX" technology. The drive really spins at a constant 10x speed (constant linear velocity). The 42x read speed is realized by splitting the laser into seven beams that read seven tracks simultaneously. The net

The Z40x marks Kenwood's entry into the crowded field for data CD-ROM drives. If they can deliver on the promised performance at a reasonable price, then this drive could be a real winner.

MICROSOFT USB SPEAKERS

Microsoft
(425) 882-8080
www.microsoft.com
Company ETA: Q4 '98
CGW's ETA: Q4 '98

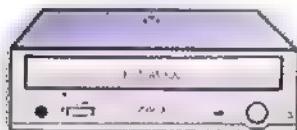
The folks in the hardware group at Microsoft looked carefully at the highly competitive market for powered speakers. Then they threw caution to the winds and

dived in. The result is a uniquely Microsoft spin on speakers. They have a fairly solid power amp—80 watts RMS total. The compact bass unit has a 6-inch, downward-firing driver coupled to a 6-inch passive radiator, so the level of mid-bass and bass is beefier than the driver size might indicate. There are a couple of small, highly sculpted satellite units.

The unique feature of the Microsoft speakers is the USB connection. If you like, you can connect these puppies to your USB port and rip that sound card

out. Imagine that: no more IRQ, DMA, or other headaches. The D/A converter is in the bass unit itself; digital data is sent out over USB to the speakers.

All is not completely rosy, however. If the game has significant music content, you need to have a software MIDI renderer (which ships with DirectX 6.0). However, that's a CPU hit that's more significant with slower systems. The sound quality, though decent, tends to be heavy in midrange and mid-bass. That's fine for most games, but it sounds overdone with acoustic music. However, there's a software graphic equalizer that ships with the speakers, so you can probably tweak to your heart's content.



result is read performance that's close to that of a hard-drive, with no annoying vibration and very fast spin-up.

In the early days of CD-ROM drives, there was a promise that games would be run directly from the CD. In this era of games that take up 400MB of hard-drive space, we can only chuckle at our naivety. Maybe Kenwood and Zen Research have broken the code.





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VELOCITY 4400**

STB
(972) 234-8750
www.stb.com
Company ETA: Q3 '98
CGW's ETA: Q3 '98

This is the first card announced that will use the powerful new RIVA TNT (Twin Texel Processing) 2D/3D accelerator. Some of the demos we've seen on this card have been quite impressive. Imagine QUAKE II at 1600x1200 at over 30fps. Imagine DeathMatch QUAKE II at 1600x1200—you can see the other guy before he sees you.

The TNT will likely be the hot ticket in AGP cards in the near future. STB's retail version will arrive with a hefty 16MB of 125MHz SDRAM—no wimpy 8MB packages need apply. The Velocity 4400 supports TV out and OpenGL, and is fully tuned for Direct3D 6.0. The TNT chip sports dual rendering engines on a single 7-million transistor chip. This card is a fully 32-bit rendering engine, and offers per-pixel MIP mapping and effects throughout. It even does anisotropic filtering. If you've had reservations about the image quality of the original RIVA 128, you won't believe that you're looking at a RIVA.

The 2D performance is likely to be quite speedy as well, and of course, it will have good VGA. Prices had not been set when we went to press, but you can safely assume that STB will price this card fairly aggressively.

MICROSOFT FORCE FEEDBACK WHEEL

MICROSOFT
(425) 882-8080
www.microsoft.com
Company ETA: Q4 '98
CGW's ETA: Q4 '98

The members of the controller team at Microsoft have spent a lot of time on the industrial design of this wheel, and it shows. It clamps to the table with a single clamp that you need to adjust only once. The floor pedals are designed so they



won't slide on either carpet or smooth floors. And the desktop unit is short, so it should fit easily on crowded desktops.

Like many such wheels, the Microsoft version is fairly small, sized more like a Formula 1 wheel. (Aside: When, oh when will we see a NASCAR sized wheel?) Also like many force feedback wheels we've seen, the forces are somewhat coarse—but it somehow seems more appropriate for a wheel.

In an interesting move, Microsoft is eschewing a USB connection for this controller. Good

force-feedback requires a high-speed (12Mbps) connection, and there were some technical reasons they couldn't go with that. So for the time being, you'll still need the same sound card connection, with supported MIDI data pin, as the Microsoft Sidewinder Force Feedback Pro joystick.

At a bit over \$200 (MSRP), it won't be cheap, but having the added pizzazz of force feedback plus the compact size may, uh, force many of us to fit our desktops with this wheel when we need our racing fix.

**AMD K6-2**

AMD
(800) 538-8450
www.amd.com
Company ETA: Q3 '98
CGW's ETA: Q3 '98

AMD is breathing life back into the old Socket 7 motherboard standard with the K6-2. In addition to higher clock speeds than its predecessor, the K6-2 incorporates AMD's 3DNow instructions—27 floating point instructions well suited to handle the math needed to speed up 3D games.

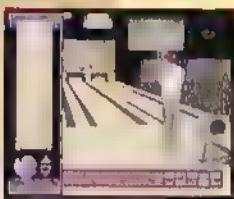
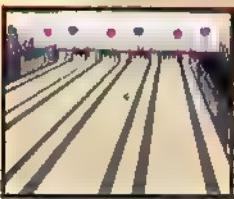
The K6-2 uses a 0.25-micron process, which will make for



higher clock speeds while it generates less heat. To ensure that you get optimum performance, you do need to install a new motherboard (a.k.a. a "Super 7" board) that supports the 100MHz memory bus and AGP graphics. AMD has been shipping 266, 300, and 333MHz K6-2's since early this summer.

To make sure that the K6-2's performance potential is reached, AMD has developed enhanced hardware drivers for DirectX 6.0, OpenGL 1.2, and Glide (3Dfx's proprietary API). DirectX 6 applications need to use the Direct3D geometry pipeline for best performance. At prices that are roughly 25 percent lower than the equivalent Pentium II and with 3D performance that is potentially much higher, the K6-2 from AMD may bring high performance 3D games to the sub-\$1,000 PC. CGW

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there's a bucket of sweat
dripping off your brow
and this shot is worth
way too much money



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is what he does with power.

Pittacus

(c. 600 BC)

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Windows 98: The Gamer's View

Is Win 98 Worth the Upgrade for Game Players?

by Denny Atkin

When it comes to Windows 98, the best news for most gamers will be that Microsoft's controversial new operating system does very little to change the PC gaming landscape. Win 98 is more or less "Windows 95.1," a fine-tuned version of the older operating system with updates to support newer hardware. Because the two operating systems share the same basic architecture, you shouldn't see any games

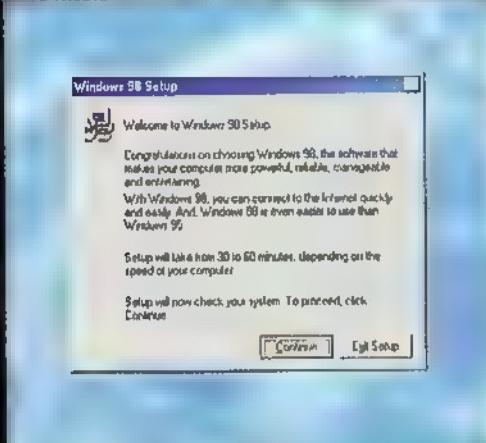
coming out that require Win 98 instead of Win 95. So the only reason to upgrade would be to get the relatively minor updates in the OS.

The Hard Decision

The most immediately noticeable upgrade in Windows 98 is the controversial (at least to the U.S. Department of Justice) integration of Internet Explorer 4.0 with the operating system. (Netscape Communicator still works fine with Win 98 if you choose to install it, by the way.) This actually does have benefits: The integration of HTML with the Windows Explorer gives you significant power to customize your desktop, even if you disable the memory-hogging Active Desktop feature. You configure the desktop to act like a Web browser, so the mouse-dexterity-challenged can open files with a single click. But there's actually little here that Windows 95 users can't get with a free download of IE 4.0 from Microsoft's Web site.

More significant for some users is Windows 98's support for new hardware technologies. Of prime interest for gamers is support for the Universal Serial Bus (USB),

Windows 98 Setup



Microsoft

EASIER SETUP Windows 98 includes more drivers on its CD than does Win 95, and it can use your old drivers if you're updating from Win 95, so most users should find the upgrade painless.

which allows you to attach multiple peripherals—such as USB game controllers—without having to deal with interrupts and other installation hassles. Win 98 also includes support for the IEEE 1394 FireWire standard, a new high-speed interface that may eventually replace IDE and SCSI, but which isn't likely to proliferate until 1999. Finally, there's support for DVD drives and television cards—not a big deal since those devices generally include more powerful viewer software than the built-in Win 98 stuff.

One enhancement of interest to flight simulator fans is that Win 98 allows you to add a second 2D/3D graphics card and drive multiple monitors. FIGHT SIMULATOR 98 already supports this graphics

capability, enabling you, for instance, to use one monitor to display your instruments, a second to show the forward view, and a third to show an external view. Note: Driver support for this feature is very limited, and it works currently with only a few video cards.

Given the growing size of today's games, Win 98's support for the FAT32 disk format should appeal to many gamers. Available in later service releases of Win 95, FAT32 uses smaller clusters so that small files take up much less space on your hard disk. Using the built-in FAT32 converter can increase your hard-disk storage by 20 percent or more, depending on the size and number of files on your drive.

Win 98 has been hyped as more stable than Win 95 due

COMPUTER GAMING WORLD



PROS: Much better hardware support than Windows 95; good Web integration; nice suite of built-in utilities.

CONS: Large memory footprint; not enough new features to justify the upgrade price for most Win 95 users.



Price: \$90 (street price, upgrade from Win 3.1 or 95); \$190 (street price, full version)

Publisher: Microsoft
Redmond, WA
(425) 882-8080

www.microsoft.com



FASTER FILES The new version of Disk Defragmenter can actually arrange files in the order in which they're accessed by the game or application, thus shortening load times.

To the maturity of its code, but, as the saying goes, actual results may vary. It's no worse than Win 95, but I've had the usual share of weird Explorer crashes when shutting down the system or opening disk windows. Win 98 does include a superb System Information tool, which contains a module that can determine if a program has overwritten system files with older versions; a Registry repair tool; and a system configuration module

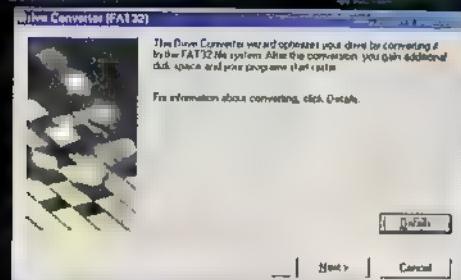
that lets you modify system startup and INI files using a simple point-and-click interface. Also, if your registry gets scrambled and Win 98 can't start up, the system will automatically load a backup copy from the last time you successfully booted. The new Windows Update feature can check Microsoft's Web site for new drivers and other updates and install them automatically—but it functions only if you've electronically registered your copy of Win 98 with Microsoft. Finally, DirectX 5.0 is now built into the operating system, so you won't have to worry about DirectX hogging your computer's drivers—at least until DirectX 6 ships this summer.

Performance Anxiety

Win 98 features a number of performance enhancements designed to speed performance in those areas where people experience most delays: loading programs; and starting up and shutting down the system. The Disk Defragmenter utility analyzes programs and determines the order in which they load accessory files and DLLs; it then reorders the files on disk for faster loading. Note

that while this does speed program loading, it makes the files appear fragmented to third-party utilities, and that running programs such as Norton SpeedDisk will undo the optimizations.

As for program perfor-



THINNER FAT The FAT32 converter will modify your hard disk's file system to use smaller clusters, which means that the tiny files associated with many games will take up less room on your hard disk.

mance, testing with ZD's WinBench 98, 3D WinBench 98, and a number of frame-counter-equipped games (UNREAL, QUAKE II, FLIGHT SIMULATOR 98, JANE'S F-15, and FLYING CORPS GOLD) showed no appreciable performance differences on systems equipped with 32MB or more of memory. If you have less RAM than that, however, you'll want to bring home a

couple of new SIMMs with your Win 98 purchase. The OS has a bigger memory footprint than does Win 95, so systems with 16MB of RAM (and even systems with 32MB with some recent games) will see much more swapping of

memory to the hard disk. This can make for jerky performance in games. Given the recent dramatic drop in price for memory, we recommend that you budget an upgrade to at least 64MB of RAM if you decide to

upgrade to Windows 98.

Happy With What Ya Got?

Of the PCs I updated to Win 98 for this article, only one machine received significantly added capability: a Pentium II system with a DVD-ROM drive, an ATI All-in-Wonder Pro TV/video card, and USB. Owners of less bleeding-edge systems will likely find that the minor feature updates and new utility software isn't worth Win 98's steep \$90 upgrade price. If you have a fairly new PC and you're interested in using technologies such as USB, you may find Win 98 a worthwhile update. Otherwise, Win 95 users would do well to take a quick trip to Microsoft's Web page: Download Internet Explorer 4.0 and the Win 95 OSR2 utility updates (www.microsoft.com/windows/downloads/contents/Updates/W95OSR2/Features.asp) and you'll get most of Windows 98's functionality at no cost. CGW

Easy Upgrade?

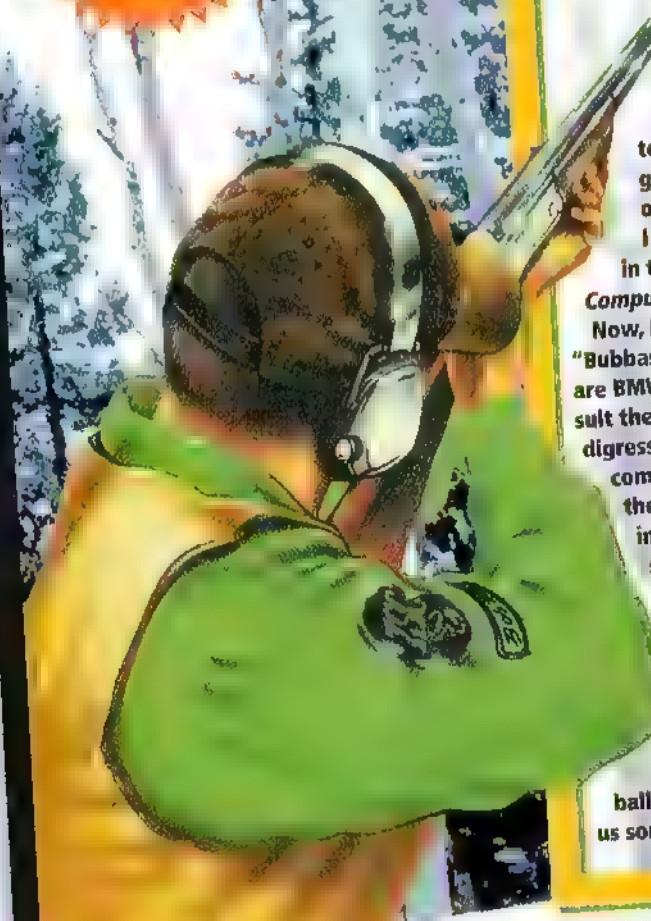
The most welcome news about the Windows 98 upgrade is that it should be painless for the vast majority of users. While Win 95 included major architectural changes from Win 3.1, Windows 98 uses the same core technology. This means you can utilize your old hardware drivers, and you shouldn't need to replace your old software. In our testing, every game and productivity application designed for Win 95 ran fine on Win 98. The only exceptions were old versions of disk-optimization utilities, such as Norton Utilities—you'll need to get an update that's compatible with Windows 98's FAT32 disk structure.

I installed the release version of Win 98 on five Win 95 systems ranging from a 16MB P133 notebook running the original release of Windows 95 to a 128MB PIV400 system running Win 95 Service Release 2.1. In each case, the upgrade process was flawless, with none of the headaches I encountered upgrading systems from Win 3.1 to Win 95. That said, there's always a risk when upgrading any PC to a new operating system, especially if you're running on older hardware or just getting around to upgrading from Win 3.1, so back up all data before performing the upgrade. In fact, we suggest backing up your data files, reformatting your hard disk, and installing the OS and your applications from scratch. This may be overkill, but we recommend an operating system reinstall at least once a year for performance and reliability reasons. Performing a fresh install of Win 98 is generally easier than installing Win 95, since Microsoft has included many more device drivers on the Windows 98 CD.

THE BUBBA FACTOR

CGW's Resident Hunter Locks His Sights on the
Hottest—and Most Unexpected—New Genre

By
Joe Vallina



The DEER HUNTER phenomenon, as it has been called, has been pontificated upon at great length for the past few months. How, people have wondered, could a small potatoes developing company like WizardWorks produce a game on a mere \$100,000 and manage to have that game shoot to number one on the PC Data best-seller list—and stay in the top five for more than six months so far—towering over games such as QUAKE II, DIABLO, and even the granddaddy of all commercially successful computer games, *MYST*. I don't claim to fathom all the factors that played a role in this Cinderella story, but several of my peers here at Computer Gaming World call it "the Bubba factor." Now, I don't subscribe to the notion that all hunters are "Bubbas"; just as I don't believe that all Northern Californians are BMW-driving, ex-hippie burnout yuppies who have to consult their cosmic counselor before they go to the john. But I digress. My point is this: Whether the "hard-core" gaming community likes it or not, hunters spend a lot of money on their sport, and now they're going digital. It's not surprising, then, to see a landslide of clones overflowing the shelves of the various (fill in the blank)-Mart stores in an attempt to take advantage of this—until now—untapped market.

In this roundup, I'll sort through the top seven contenders to the DEER HUNTER crown and let you know which are worth your money. So without further ado, let's break out our digital shotguns and rifles, don our silicon blaze-orange vests and camouflage ballcaps, and load up our .357-caliber mice—it's time to go kill us some virtual critters.

DEER HUNTER'S EXTENDED SEASON ★★

DEER HUNTER'S EXTENDED SEASON is really just a glorified DEER HUNTER with a few new hunting areas and the addition of a black powder rifle. To be fair, the game doesn't claim to be much more than that in the first place, so at least WizardWorks is being honest. As with the original DEER HUNTER, EXTENDED SEASON lets you choose between a variety of prehunt options, including where to hunt, which weapon to use, and whether or not you want to use a tree stand and/or scents. After you make your initial gameplay choices, you are taken to the map screen for the hunting grounds you've picked, where you will blindly click around in a more or less random pattern, looking for signs of deer activity. These signs include rubs, scrapes, bedding areas, and droppings. When you finally find a sign of life (the signs in EXTENDED SEASON seem to be fewer and farther between than those in the original), you click on the Hunt icon and you're magically transported to that spot to begin your hunt.

Once in your hunting spot, you click on the appropriate icons at the bottom of the screen to use cover scent and/or attractant, a deer call, binoculars, and rattling antlers. To the game's credit, the deer AI is actually tweaked so that if you start calling or rattling in an unrealistic manner, no buck will come within a mile of your position. The direction of the wind also has a lot to do with how close a deer will come to where you are waiting. To bag a trophy, you must take these aspects of the game into consideration. When you do finally raise your weapon to take a shot at Bambi, your aim will grow increasingly unsteady the longer you hold the weapon to aim it, as if your arms were growing weary.



Unfortunately, that's about where the game's realism ends. Although the game does take into account the distance from you to the target (which means you have to aim higher the farther it is from you), any reasonable shot results in a kill, even

rump and gut shots. In the real world, as any real hunter knows, a gut shot usually results in a long, arduous day of tracking a



OLD-TIMEY Use the black powder rifle for that Lewis and Clark feel.



WINTER WONDERLAND It's white, but it's not too different from before.

wounded, yet surprisingly energetic animal through the woods until it finally succumbs to its wounds. So why not just take a fleeting potshot at the animal? In EXTENDED SEASON, you might as well. Of course, after the kill, just as in DEER HUNTER, the deer's head is instantly sent to the trophy room—let's see some gutting and skinning sims! While some may think this last request unreasonable, they surely couldn't object to some post-1994 looking 3D graphics. The deer animations are decent, if primitive, but this game, like DEER HUNTER, is a side-scroller

and nothing more. Your inability to move around the environment is frustrating, to say the least, although WizardWorks promises this feature in the upcoming DEER 2 (which should be out this fall). On an up note, the game's relaxing sounds almost make up for your lack of mobility.

DEER HUNTER'S EXTENDED SEASON is a decent add-on to a mediocre game. If you liked DEER HUNTER, you'll like this—and for a modest diversion, it's not all that bad. For the money, you could do worse.

Publisher: WizardWorks; \$14.99; www.wizworks.com

DEER HUNTER COMPANION ★

Unless you absolutely, positively, must own everything with the DEER HUNTER name on it, THE DEER HUNTER COMPANION is a waste of your hard-earned dollars. Basically, all it includes is a strategy guide, but that guide contains no new or helpful information. In fact, everything covered here regarding actual gameplay has already appeared in the booklets included with DEER HUNTER and EXTENDED SEASON—with the exception of the cheat codes, which can be found on the Web or in our July and August CG Tips articles.

The remainder of the booklet consists of *Outdoor Life*-style "Real-Life" hunting stories and real-world hunting tips—you'd be better off buying that copy of

Outdoor Life. Even the five new maps are inconsequential when you think of the hundreds of user-created maps now available on the Net.



The only other feature in this lame package is an .AVI video file called *A Season to Remember*. Yawn. A portion of DEER HUNTER COMPANION's profits go to Wildlife Forever. (I think it was the only way the big-wigs at WizardWorks could sleep at night after releasing this rip-off.) Save your money for tags and licenses.

Publisher: WizardWorks; \$9.99; www.wizworks.com



BFD This lame AVI movie is the only thing included in DEER HUNTER COMPANION that you can't get elsewhere.

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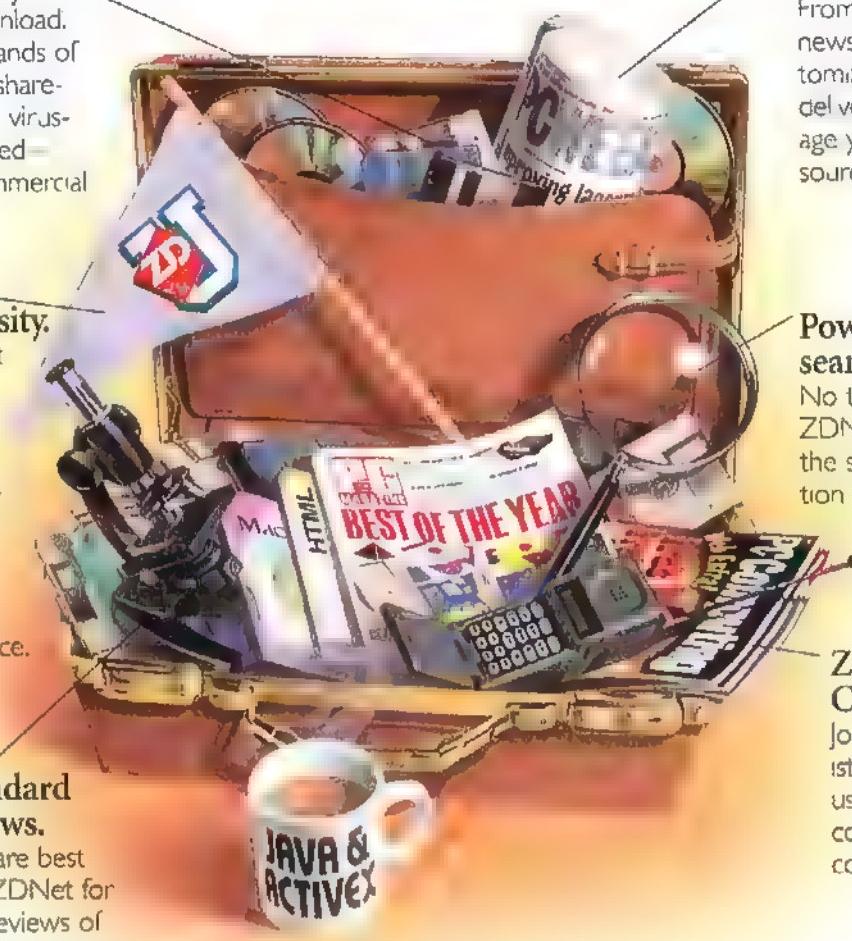
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SPORTING CLAYS ★★★★

For my money, when it comes to pure, simple gaming fun, out of all the games in this roundup, SPORTING CLAYS gets my vote. The reason? It doesn't try to do too much, and what it does, it does damn well. The game, developed by Diversions Software for WizardWorks, bills itself as an "Interactive Shooting Simulation," and, indeed, it feels as if you are shooting a real shotgun at real clay targets. You participate in a five-stand tournament in which you shoot at either 50 or 100 clay pigeons (there are five types from which to choose).

For such a simple little game, this guy is packed with user-defined options. You can personalize these options for up to four shooters. Options include the type of clays you want to shoot, your match location, the choke pattern size of your shotgun (at the smallest choke pattern, this game gets extremely difficult), and the ability to play with an inverted mouse.

You can also toggle various display options that help you stay on target while shooting. Among others, these options include Patterning, which shows where your shots hit; Tracking, which shows the path of your aim and the clays' trajectory; and Show Traps, which shows from where the clays will be thrown. You even choose what you want your shooter to yell when commanding the clays' release ("Ready," "Go," or the traditional "Pull") and if your shooter will have a male or female voice.

Once you enter a tournament or choose a station from which to practice, you will go to a shooting stand. You will see your shotgun barrel graphic (unfortunately the most unrealistic and primitive part of the game), and a beautiful 2D scene of the stand and its environs. There is a three-step process involved in shooting at the targets.



To call for the clays' release, you right-click once. After the clay is released, you right-click again to raise your gun. Finally, you left-click to shoot (two shots per release cycle). This process works very well. However, it takes a while to get the hang of leading the clays enough to stay on target, and the shotgun realistically "kicks" after each shot, so you have to

recover quickly in order to hit the second clay.

The animations for the clays' release are very realistic, with the exception of the fur-and-feather clays, which look like bouncing beach balls from Hell. A Field Info status bar at the top of the screen tells you which kind of clays are forthcoming and where they will originate. The smart shooter will heed these hints.

While SPORTING CLAYS can get a



CHECK YOUR PATTERN SPORTING CLAYS has many user-defined options.

little repetitive after a long session, this game is perfect for the casual gamer who wants a fun, quick diversion between meetings or appointments.

Publisher: WizardWorks;
\$24.99; www.wizworks.com

ROCKY MOUNTAIN TROPHY HUNTER ★★★

ROCKY MOUNTAIN TROPHY HUNTER tries to take the DEER HUNTER engine a step beyond its humble origins; but while it does have some enhanced features and new game-play options, its gameplay is really just glorified DEER HUNTER action.

You begin the hunt by naming your player and deciding which weapon and accessories to use (the game's token new weapon is a .357 revolver). A new twist in TROPHY HUNTER, however, is that you have a set number of inventory items that you can bring along on your hunt. This means you must plan ahead regarding which animals you want to hunt.

There are four inventory item slots available in the game, but the fourth is always taken up on my hunts by the spotting scope. Prompted no doubt by the endless wailing and gnashing of teeth by reviewers and gamers with regard to DEER HUNTER's horrible guess-and-click map interface, the folks at WizardWorks have wisely added this

handy feature. The spotting scope lets you see any animals within a short distance from your location on the map screen, giving you a much better idea of which way to go to find game.

Another improvement is the addition of wounded animal tracking. In my DEER HUNTER review (CGW #168), I lamented the fact that it didn't matter which part of the deer's body you shot, all hits resulted in a kill—gut shots be damned. In TROPHY HUNTER, however, a gut or rump shot realistically results in the animal running away, leaving a blood trail for you to follow. The news isn't all good,



however. Since you still can't move around within the environment, you have to go to the map screen and (ugh) guess-and-click to find the series of blood trails.

You can hunt elk, moose, bear, and ram in TROPHY HUNTER, which is a pretty good representation of North American big-game hunting. There is only one large hunting area.

Once the actual hunt begins, the game plays almost exactly like DEER HUNTER. You use your calls and scents while waiting, watching, and listening for the animals' approach. When an animal comes into range, you raise your weapon and shoot it. That's about it.

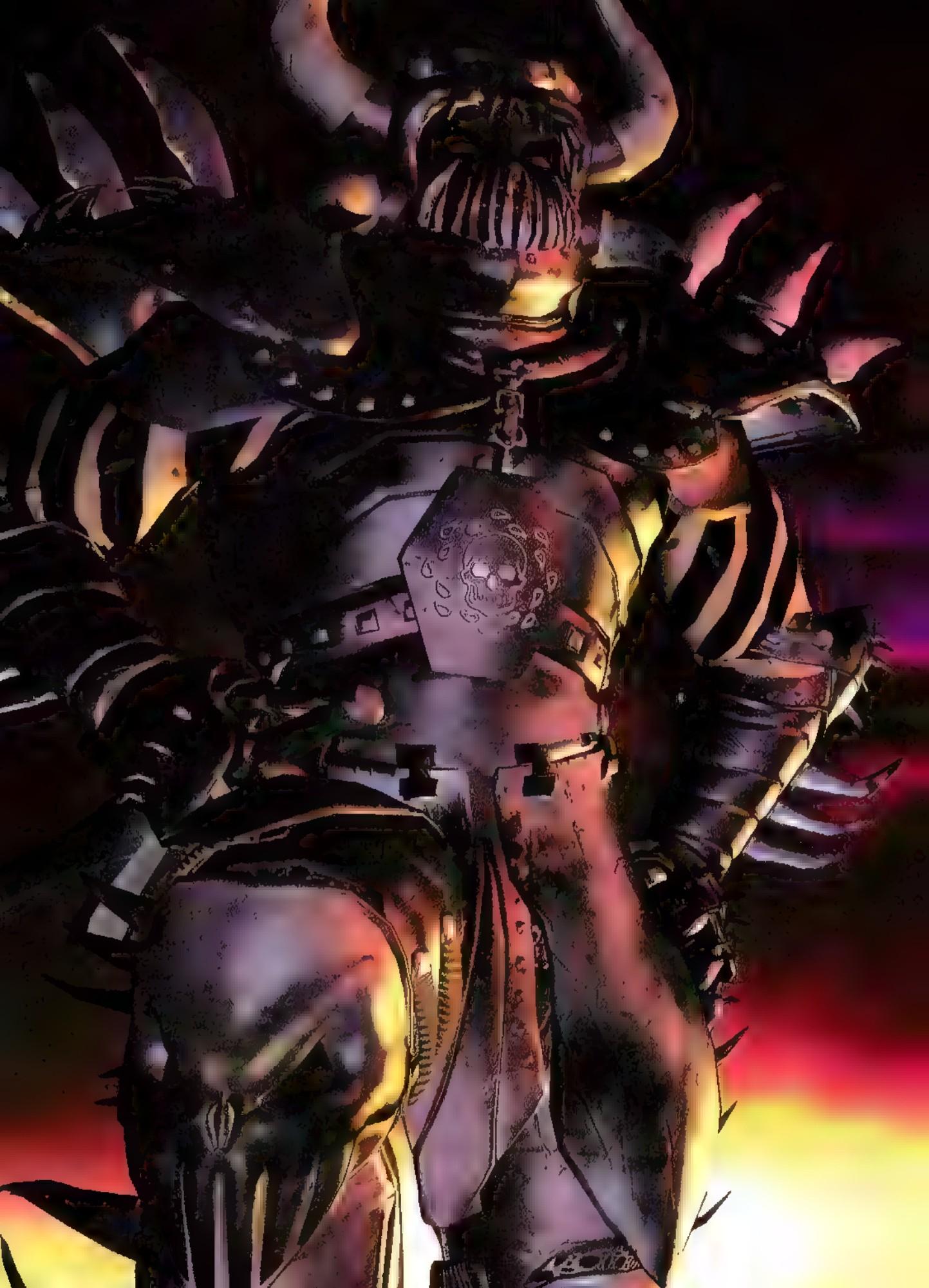
One "feature," for me, makes this game incredibly more fun. Specifically, a cheat code that I had been dreaming of since I first laid eyes on the original DEER HUNTER: a rocket launcher (called the "Atomic Disemboweler 3000"). Go to the hunt screen and type in BGBarbecue, and you too can know the joy of demolishing a 300-pound moose with a high-explosive projectile!

ROCKY MOUNTAIN TROPHY HUNTER is a decent game, but it suffers from many of the problems inherited from its predecessor, DEER HUNTER. It's an improvement, but the series still has a way to go.

Publisher: WizardWorks;
\$24.99; www.wizworks.com



SHOT DOWN IN FLAMES That used to be an elk on the wrong end of my Atomic Disemboweler 3000.



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CABELA'S BIG GAME HUNTER ★★☆☆☆

CABELA'S BIG GAME HUNTER suffers from a split personality: 50 percent of the game is decent; 50 percent of it is utter crap. Let me explain.

This is the only game in our roundup that makes an effort to re-create one of the most important aspects of any hunt: the preparations that take place before you ever actually set foot in the field.

Before the hunt, you get a set amount of money to use. With it, you purchase the appropriate tags and licenses, as well as supplies.

BIG GAME HUNTER has a multitude of gameplay options. You can choose from 9 weapons and more than 65 hunting accessories, which include specialized clothing and safety gear—all conveniently found in the Cabela catalog. You can hunt in Virginia, South Dakota,

the Yukon, and Montana. The game features animals as diverse as bighorn sheep, coyote, mule deer, and bison (there are 12 other species as well). You even have to sight in your weapons before the hunt! The "3D" graphics here are nothing to write home about, but they do the job.

It's when you actually take all of your accumulated stuff out into the woods that things go downhill fast. The in-hunt graphics are terrible. They resemble nothing even remotely close to the real wilderness. To make matters worse, the ambient sounds cut out and sound unrealistic. The only time the sound is consistent is when your guide pipes up to tell you where to look for your game. You won't see it, of course, as no animals are actually modeled into the scenery.

Instead, when you drag your cursor around the part of the screen the guide directs you to, your cursor turns into a crosshair and an FMV video showing the animal begins.

Any semblance of realism is immediately out the window as you see your static weapon and targeting reticle hover over the target animal. You have a precious few seconds to aim at the video animal and fire, or your intended



IS IT LIVE... Or is it a crappy full-motion video? Ugh.



prey will bound away. If you do get off a shot, be prepared to miss—again

and again. Once, I sighted in an elk with a .338 centerfire rifle at about 75 yards. When I missed, the guide said, "The wind out here is tricky, it blew the bullet off course." A .338 at 75 yards? Are you kidding me?

If you do manage to get a kill, you'll be rewarded with prize money to finance another hunt. But who would want to repeat this lousy process? If Head Games could find a workable hunt engine to pair with the pre-hunt preparations, they'd improve the game all the way to mediocre. As it stands, it's not worth your money.

Publisher: Head Games; \$19.99, www.headgames.com

WILD TURKEY HUNT ★★

You can think of WILD TURKEY HUNTER (WTH) as a pared-down DEER HUNTER with even more primitive visuals.



EARLY THANKSGIVING This tom is pretty far away from me, but one good blast should easily take him down.

One thing that WILD TURKEY HUNTER really gets right is its sound. When you hear a tom gobbling at you onscreen, you'll swear there's a real bird in your house. The ambient sounds and the two types of calls (a scratch call and a box call) also sound very realistic. However, that's about as far as this game's realism goes.

There are five hunting areas in the game, and each setting has the appropriate species of turkey. Sadly, though, the environments don't look very realistic, and the different turkeys all act the same: stupid.

Domestic turkeys have a reputation for stupidity; but as any turkey hunter knows, wild turkey species are very shrewd. However, in this game, a turkey will just meander right up to you when you use either call, whether you use it realistically or not. It's then a simple matter to blast him onto your logbook screen, which keeps track of all your kills. Also, one shot will usually do it in WTH, although in the real world, a turkey's many tough layers of feathers can keep a single, long shotgun blast from being a killing shot. In this game, a



200-yard blast is as good as one at point-blank range. Also, you can't move around the chosen hunting area, and there is no map screen—you're stuck in one place the whole time.

If you're dead-set on going for toms this virtual hunting season, you might like this game. Those not so limited, however, should probably find another stretch of woods.

Publisher: ValuSoft/Sunstorm; \$14.99; www.wizworks.com

SPORTSMAN'S PARADISE ★★☆☆☆

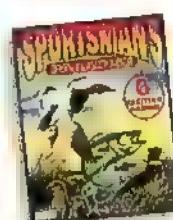
SPORTSMAN'S PARADISE is a collection of arcade games released in 1996. The graphics are dated and terrible, the gameplay is erratic, and the sound is very bad. So why do I keep playing Pigeon Hunt? Because it's the only game I know of that lets me live out my fantasy of going into my neighborhood park and blast-



EAT IT, PIGEON Notice the exquisite pile of gore I'm leaving in my wake.

ing all those flying rats that swarm me when I'm trying to eat my lunch.

At \$19.99, this game isn't a bargain, but between its six games (*Trap Shooting Pro*, *Duck Hunt II*, *Pigeon Hunt*, *Prairie Dog Hunt Pro*, *Pheasant Hunt*, and *Fly Fishing*) you should find some-



thing you like. Just keep in mind that this game does not approach the level of quality of the other games in this roundup. By the way,

for an updated version of *Prairie Dog Hunt Pro*, go to www.divsoft.com/pdhpro.html.

Publisher: WizardWorks; \$19.99; www.wizworks.com

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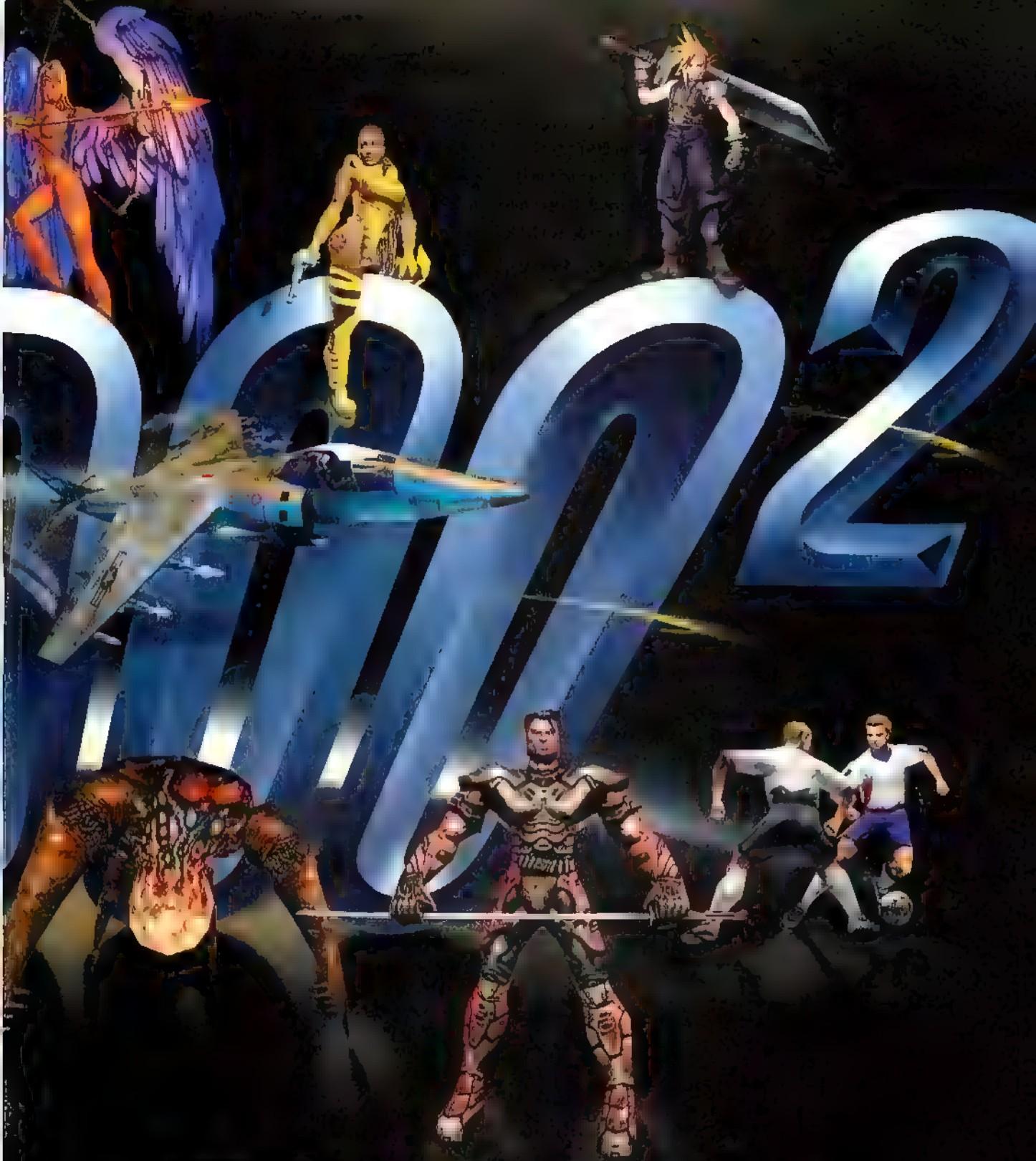
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When boards based on 3Dfx's first-

generation Voodoo chipset came on the scene, there were only two companies making boards: Orchid and Diamond. Others followed, but for a while those were the only two boards available.

Not so with Voodoo². There are at least eight different companies making Voodoo²-based boards, and with that many players all delivering what seems to be very similar, if not identical, products, one has to ask, "Aren't they all pretty much the same?" I recently took a look at 10 different Voodoo² cards in one huge orgy of benchmark testing. What I found may surprise you.

Why Voodoo²? Well, as of this writing, Voodoo² is still the fastest and most versatile 3D chipset on the market for PC gaming, delivering very fast Direct3D, OpenGL, and Glide performance. It is perhaps this last area of performance that really makes the 3Dfx story so interesting. Glide is 3Dfx's own low-level API that many game developers embraced owing to Direct3D's shaky beginnings. And while Direct3D has made huge improvements, as have other accelerators, some game developers are still writing to Glide first, and Direct3D when they get around to it. And even if this trend reverses itself, Voodoo² is still a very solid Direct3D accelerator. So, in Voodoo² you won't get any 2D functionality, but what you will

get is not only Glide, but very solid performance on Direct3D and OpenGL.

A Look at the Numbers

We tested the cards on a 400MHz Pentium II system (CGW's No Holds Barred System, see page 196) and a 200MHz Pentium MMX system—something that's a bit more representative of what many gamers have. If the Voodoo² card had a built-in performance slider in the control panel, we jacked it to the maximum stable setting. This actually varied—the Monster3D II, for example, couldn't run faster than 93MHz on our systems, though that certainly didn't seem to hurt its performance.

Most surprising were the results on the 200MHz Pentium MMX system, though in retrospect, I probably shouldn't have been surprised. Note that the difference between slowest and fastest card is roughly 1 percent—statistically insignificant. Also interesting was how little the performance dipped at 800x600. There are several possible reasons: First, on a 200MHz Pentium MMX system, a Voodoo² board is host-bound, meaning that the Voodoo² card is twiddling its



The Pure3D II is an interesting card, but sports an oddly placed SLI connector.

3D Glossary

Glide 3Dfx's proprietary low-level API that allows game developers to squeeze more performance out of the Voodoo² chipset.

Pass-Through A VGA cable that takes 2D card's output, and routes it into the Voodoo² board.

SLI (Scan-Line Interleave) 3Dfx's proprietary technology for running two Voodoo² boards that deliver nearly twice the fill rate of a single board. Each board draws every other scan line, or half the picture.

SST Command Commands issued at boot-up in the AUTOEXEC.BAT that define performance parameters. In Voodoo², this can usually be tweaked in Display Properties sheet.

TMU (Texture Mapping Unit) This chip, as the name suggests, handles all texture mapping operations. Voodoo² actually has two TMUs to achieve better performance.

Then there's the issue of how much memory to get. About the only 3D GameGauge score that was significantly affected by the presence of only 4MB of texture memory was F22 ADI. It uses 8.3MB of textures when running, which was

Continued on 189



On our 400MHz Pentium II system, the 24MB X-24 slightly outperformed two 12MB Voodoo²'s in SLI mode.

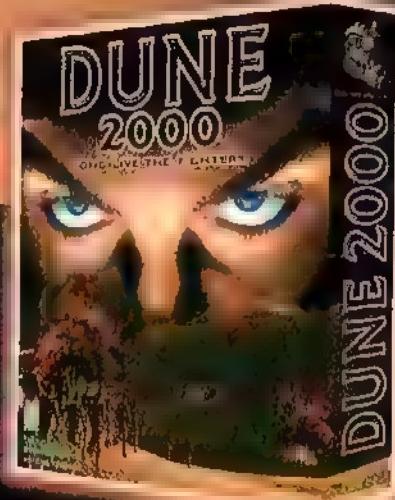
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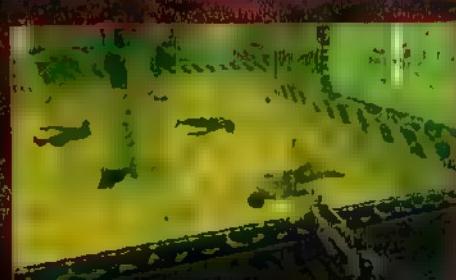
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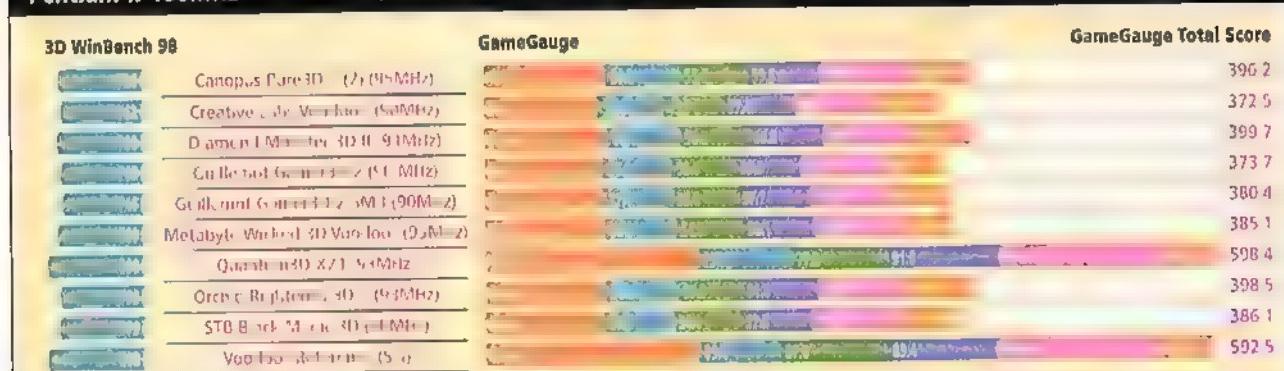
Features Comparison

Product	CGW Rating	Software Bundle	Price (12MB unless stated)
Canopus Pure3D II (2) (95 MHz) (888) 868-2533 www.canopuscorp.com	★★★★★	THE RECKONING	\$329; \$279 for XL version (no TV out)
Creative Labs Voodoo ² (90 MHz) (408) 428-6600 www.soundblaster.com	★★★★★	ULTIMATE RACE PRO, INCOMING, G-POLICE	\$299
Diamond Monster 3D II (94MHz) (800) 468-5846 www.diamondmm.com	★★★★★	BATTLEZONE (large texture version), MONSTER TRUCK MADNESS 2, INCOMING, CD of playable demos	\$299, \$249 for 8MB
Guillemot Gamer3D 2 [12MB] (90 MHz)	★★★★★	INCOMING, F1 RACING (full), PLANE CRAZY, HEXEN II, SUBCULTURE, REDLINE RACER (playable demos)	\$299, \$229 for 8MB
Guillemot Gamer3D 2 [8MB] (90 MHz) (800) 967-0863 www.guillemot.com	★★★★★		
Metabyte Wicked 3D Voodoo ² (95MHz) (510) 494-9700 www.wicked3d.com	★★★★★	None	\$299
Quantum3D X24 (93MHz) (888) 747-1020 www.quantum3d.com	★★★★★	24 Playable demos	\$699 (24MB)
Orchid Righteous 3D II (93MHz) (800) 577-0977 www.orchid.com	★★★★★	BATTLEZONE, G-POLICE (A3D enhanced), INCOMING (full versions), JEDI KNIGHT (limited vers.)	\$299; \$229 for 8MB
STB Black Magic 3D (90 MHz) (972) 234-8750 www.stb.com	★★★★★	INCOMING, BATTLEZONE	\$279

Performance Data

Pentium II 400MHz

Test Resolution: 800x600



Pentium MMX 200MHz

Test Resolution: 800x600



Frame Rates:

How We Test. To test products, we use the relevant WinBench 98 tests to measure the CPU's 3D performance. Then, to see how well a system performs running 3D games, we run our own 3D GameGauge, a collection of six games—four Direct3D, two OpenGL. The 3D GameGauge score is the sum of the six games' frame rates.

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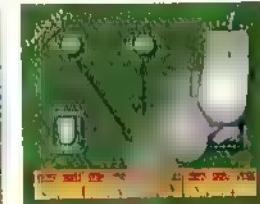
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To SLI or Not to SLI?

3Dfx's SLI technology and the potential performance boost it promises is enough to leave most gamers drooling. But like all things drool-worthy in this business, the price tag will most likely give you pause. So this begs the question: Do you really need SLI? The answer, in most cases, is no. Here's why:

Voodoo² is quite often host-bound, and sits waiting for the CPU to hand it more triangles to draw. So if a single Voodoo² board is twiddling its thumbs, then the only thing doubled by adding a second board is thumb-twiddling. No huge performance increase. And you're talking about laying down another \$300 for the second board.

Are there instances where you'd want that second board? Yes. If you absolutely, positively have to have the biggest, baddest, hellacious fast setup, and you already have a super-fast CPU (at least a 300MHz Pentium II), then twin Voodoo²s will take you there. Or, if

you really want to run all your games at 1024x768, then you'd need a second board. One design gap in the Voodoo² is that, for all its horsepower, you can't run a single board at 1024x768 if you're double-buffering and have a Z-buffer.

If you're ready to get a Voodoo² board, then the way to go is to buy a single board, get it up and running, and see how it feels. If it feels sluggish (not likely), or you find that you're really pining for 1024x768, then make the second trip to the computer store. As DirectX 6.0 games begin to arrive that use multitexturing, these may necessitate a second board, but the thing to do here is play the game first, and if it feels sluggish, consider a second board. Otherwise, enjoy the single board, and consider a second when you find that new games are bogging down your single board. But, appreciate that as new games come out, it may not be Voodoo² that's your bottleneck, but your CPU. —Dave Salvator

Continued from page 182

probably the root cause of the slightly slower scores. The 3D WinBench score was slightly lower due to several scenes that have big texture sets. Most games didn't seem to stress an 8MB card much, and they are certainly less expensive. Of course, texture sets in games are growing, not shrinking, so having that extra 4MB of texture memory on 12MB boards will mean less frame-rate stutter as newer titles come out that exceed the 8MB cards' onboard texture memory.

SLI can significantly boost performance on a fast system, but it was interesting to note that the performance at 1024x768 dropped off quite a bit. Still, an SLI-equipped system is about as fast as you can get today—but it ain't cheap.

Judgement Day

I used several different criteria for assigning scores. Performance did play

a minor role, but was really a small consideration. I also looked at software bundles, price, design issues, and ease of installation. For example, the STB card is pretty bare bones, with no real difference in price. In addition, the driver installer CD launched an ActiveMovie video on startup—something that actually crashed several 2D cards we tried.

The Metabyte card used a substitute Direct3D geometry pipeline. The net result was a hugely boosted 3D WinBench 98 score. At first, an enhanced D3D pipeline sounds good, but only a handful of games use it. So the only real benefit at this point is a boosted 3D WinBench score—something we tend to frown upon.

Of all the cards, the Monster 3D II is the most polished, is slightly faster than the rest, and has a very solid bundle. So our top nod goes to that card. The Pure3D II looks interesting, except for the weird placement of the SLI connector. The Righteous 3D II has a good bundle and seems to be slightly cheaper than the other 12MB cards, at least at the time of the review. *CGW*



The Righteous 3D II has just about the best bundle, and is a bit cheaper than most other boards.



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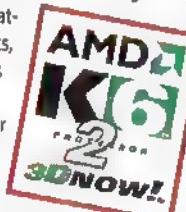
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IN SEARCH OF THE ULTIMATE GAMING MACHINE

New 3DNow! Technology May Give AMD an Edge Over Intel

AMD and the other non-Intel CPU makers have figured out how to compete with Intel when it comes to running business applications, but when running 3D games, AMD has often faltered. Why? Because business applications primarily use a CPU's integer units (the part of the chip that handles whole numbers) whereas a 3D game needs fast floating-point performance (numbers with decimal points, 3.14, for example). AMD wanted to pursue business desktops first, and, to the company's credit, its K6 processor delivers very solid and competitive integer numbers. Now, AMD's K6-2 is poised to deliver a floating-point advantage over a similarly-clocked Pentium II using AMD's own 3DNow! technology.

AMD's approach does have several potential pitfalls. First and foremost, games don't get the 3DNow!'s performance boost "for free." A game must either be written using Direct3D transform and lighting (T/L) engine, something few game developers have opted to use, or be written using custom assembly code. Ironically, in wooing game developers to use Direct3D's T/L engine, AMD may actually have a friend in Intel. Intel's next processor, code-named Katmai,



will have its own set of instructions for accelerating Direct3D transforms and lighting (if D3D's T/L engine is used). So, given that both Intel and its competitors (including AMD) will have ways of accelerating the CPU portion of Direct3D's pipeline, game developers may find D3D's T/L engine more enticing. Additionally, the DirectX 6.0 version of the D3D T/L engine has undergone a substantial rewrite, and should be a much better performer than its predecessor. A downside for AMD is that, aside from the (important) addition of 3DNow!, AMD made no other enhancements to K6-2's floating-point unit, so games that aren't 3DNow!-aware will still lag on AMD versus Intel.

One of AMD's chief advantages has always been price. At press time, AMD's 300MHz K6-2 was selling for under \$200, versus Intel's 333MHz Pentium II, which goes for \$460. However, Intel was gearing up for price cuts that will substantially cut into AMD's price advantage. Intel will also be bringing out 450MHz chips later this year, and AMD is still a ways away from matching that clock speed.

We'll do a full review of this chip next month, but until then, here are some numbers to chew on. —Dave Salvador

PERFORMANCE BENCHMARKS: Though the K6-2 trails a Pentium II 300MHz in many cases, AMD nonetheless turns in respectable numbers across the board, and, in several instances, squarely beats the Pentium II.

WinBench 98	WinBench 98 CPU32 (Integer Test)	WinBench 98 FPUmark	WinBench 98 BGWM 1024x768x16	3D WinBench 98 640x480x16
AMD K6-2 233MHz	72	1150	170	668
Pentium II 300MHz	740	1540	147	668

GameGauge (800x600)					
FORSAKEN	INCOMING	TUROK	QUAKE	QUAKE II	F2ZADOF
AMD K6-2 233MHz	484	484	484	484	427.4
Pentium II 300MHz	484	484	484	484	479.3

How We Test: To test products we use the relevant WinBench 98 tests to measure the CPU's 3D performance. Then, to see how well a system performs running 3D games we run our own 3D GameGauge, a collection of six games—four Direct3D, two OpenGL. The 3D GameGauge score is the sum of the six games' frame rates.

TNT to Explode Onto the Scene

By the time you read this, the first RIVA TNT boards may be hitting store shelves near you.

I recently had the chance to play with an early version of the STB Velocity 4400, STB's own RIVA TNT board. STB was the first graphics-card company with a TNT announcement. In a bold move, the retail version of the 4400 will come in one flavor: 16MB of SDRAM with TV out.

I popped this alpha part into CGW's



No Holds Barred system (see page 196). I don't want to quote numbers here, but performance was better than any 2D/3D combo card I've seen. On top of that, games like QUAKE II and FLIGHT SIMULATOR 98 looked spectacular at 1024x768 and 1280x1024 (respectively).

More importantly, the image quality was impressive. There was none of the dithering artifacts that were present with the original RIVA 128. The only polygon cracking I saw was

inherent to the games' engines.

The RIVA TNT chip on the 4400 has dual rendering engines, and is designed to work with DirectX 6.0. My testing was on DirectX 5.0, but performance was still pretty solid. Some of the frame-rates approached single Voodoo²-like performance—not bad for alpha hardware and drivers. And, unlike a single Voodoo² board, I could run z-buffered games at resolutions higher than 800x600.

Overall, this board shows great promise, though I'll reserve judgement until I see final product. —Loyd Case

TechWatch

3Dfx Banshee: 3Dfx's first integrated 2D/3D accelerator. Banshee will be 3Dfx's first large-scale entry into the lucrative OEM/system-makers side of the graphics business; where about two-thirds of all graphics chips are sold. Performance numbers on the as-yet-unannounced part are very sketchy, but we've heard rumors that its 2D performance will be very competitive, which was a weakness in their Voodoo Rush chip-set. ETA: Q3 '98

S3 Savage3D: Rumors of S3's demise have been somewhat exaggerated. While their VIRGE part's 3D performance underwhelmed and limped along, S3 regrouped, realized that they had to produce a competitive 3D part, and has come back with Savage3D. This part is spec'd to have a fill rate of around 125Mpixels/sec drawing trilinear filtered pixels, which should have S3 competitive with nVidia's RIVA 128zx, Matrox's G200 and Intel's i740 this fall. ETA: Q3 '98

Intel Katmai: Intel's next round of CPUs, with anticipated clock speeds of 450–500MHz. In addition to the higher clock speed, Katmai CPUs will also feature what Intel has clumsily dubbed "Katmai New Instructions," a name given to avoid calling these new instruction-set extensions MMX2. Among the other things these instructions will speed up will be Direct3D's geometry engine (in DX6), allowing these CPUs to crank more polygons per second. ETA: Q4 '98



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Weird, Wacky, and Wonderful

Pipe-dreams and Reality on the Trade Show Circuit

In the merry month of May, I plunged into two different trade shows: Computer Game Developer's Conference (CGDC) and the Electronics Entertainment Expo (E3). I met with a lot of people and saw a lot of interesting and cool stuff. What I didn't see was any new trends, in hardware or in games. On the contrary, everything looked pretty evolutionary.

However, this month I want to write about some of the offbeat hardware I've seen. It would be a mistake to pass judgement on any of these—it's too early to tell—but all of them definitely march to a different drummer. Some of these will likely be reviewed in the future. For now, let's dive in and take a preliminary look.

Machine Gunnery

ThrustMaster was showing an early prototype of something it's tentatively calling the Fist Fighter. If you've ever seen the handle on the U.S. Army .50 cal. machine gun, the Fist Fighter looks vaguely like an ergonomically sculpted version of that handle. It's designed to be used with action games like UNREAL or QUAKE II.

It's a full 6-degrees-of-freedom controller. You grab the handle with both hands; it has pitch, yaw, and roll axes. You hold down a button to move, and move the handle to point in any direction. It was amazingly intuitive when I tried it—just like aiming a .50 cal. machine gun.



LOYD CASE

attached to anything. That's right, it's a wheel that you hold in the air. (Okay, there was a cable to connect it to the computer.) It uses an accelerometer to detect the motion of your hands, rather like Microsoft's more conventional-looking Freestyle gamepad. A throttle slider is mounted on the body of the steering wheel. The whole affair seemed to work well, but since it had zero feedback, it was hard to tell how far to rotate the wheel. Still, it looked like a promising alternative to clamping a massive steering wheel to your desktop.

Not a Wheel

Then there was the Interact wheel...er...not a wheel...er...

a moment. The folks at Hercules have teamed up with Rendition and Fujitsu to offer the Thriller Conspiracy. This is a PCI board with a Rendition V2200 controller and a Fujitsu Pinlite



geometry accelerator. It's aimed squarely at people with Pentium 200 systems and slower who can't afford the cost of upgrading their systems. The downside is that the geometry accelerator only kicks in with OpenGL or Rendition Redline games. It does nothing

I didn't see any new trends in hardware [at E3].
On the contrary, everything looked evolutionary.

ThrustMaster may just be onto something here.

Air Wheel

Another company, SC&T, was showing a wheel called the Air Racer. What's different about this wheel, however, is that it isn't

maybe a wheel. It looks a lot like a controller SC&T did for the Nintendo 64. It vaguely resembles a high-tech version of a wheel-lock pistol. You can hold the device with one hand (by a pistol grip, which has the trigger buttons). The body of the controller has a small wheel that vibrates if the game supports force feedback. Again, the idea is to have a driving controller that does not take up a lot of desk space. This one leaves me scratching my head, but then I may just be conservative.

It's a Conspiracy

Let's take a break from game controllers and look at graphics for

Direct3D, because Direct3D doesn't yet support hardware acceleration for lighting and transform operations.

If you're on a tight budget, but want to play OpenGL games like

QUAKE II fully accelerated, then

this is an interesting board. On a system with a Pentium 133, QUAKE II can run consistently in excess of 20fps. At \$149 for an 8MB board, it's a good solution for gamers who haven't yet bitten the bullet on a 3Dfx card (possibly because they have no free PCI slots). We'll definitely review this one when it's out, so watch for it in upcoming issues.

Continued on page 200



SC&T Air Racer





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KILLER RIGS

TWO RECIPES FOR THE ULTIMATE GAMING MACHINE

These are our top picks for each component.* Use this list to build your dream system, or to upgrade select components. All products tested using Ziff-Davis benchmarks and/or a variety of games.



NO HOLDS BARRED

COMPONENT	PRODUCT	PRICE	WEB ADDRESS
Motherboard	Asus P2B LS	\$350	www.asus.com
CPU	Pentium II/400	\$805	www.intel.com
Memory	128MB Corsair ECC PC100 SDRAM	\$350	www.corsairmicro.com
Disk Controller	Built-in Ultra2 SCSI	\$0	N/A
Primary Graphics	Canopus Total3D/128V AGP	\$199	www.canopuscorp.com
Secondary Graphics	Quantum3D Obsidian X24	\$699	www.quantum3d.com
Hard Drive	Seagate Cheetah 9LP	\$950	www.seagate.com
CD-ROM/DVD	Plexor Ultraplex	\$225	www.plexor.com
Monitor	Sony 500PS	\$1,395	www.sony.com
Primary Audio	Diamond Monster Sound MX200	\$149	www.diamondmm.com
Speakers	EFT-11	\$600	www.eminenttech.com
Modem	3Com ImpactIQ	\$200	www.3com.com
Networking	Built-in Intel 10/100 ethernet chip	\$0	N/A
Case	In-Win IQ500	\$115	www.in-win.com
Power Supply	Turbocool 300	\$129	www.pcpowercooling.com
Keyboard	MS Natural Keyboard	\$69	www.microsoft.com/hardware
Mouse/Pointing Device	Logitech Mouseman Plus	\$59	www.logitech.com
Action Game Controller	Rage 3D	\$29	www.thrustmaster.com
Flight Joystick	ThrustMaster F22 Pro	\$129	www.thrustmaster.com
Throttle	ThrustMaster TQS	\$149	www.thrustmaster.com
Rudder Pedals	ThrustMaster RCS	\$129	www.thrustmaster.com
Driving Controls	TSW	\$360	http://solo.mav.net/~thomas/

TOTAL: **\$7,090.00**

LEAN & MEAN

COMPONENT	PRODUCT	PRICE	WEB ADDRESS
Motherboard	ABIT BXG	\$149	www.abit.com.tw
CPU	Pentium II/300	\$375	www.intel.com
Memory	64MB PC100 SDRAM	\$160	www.corsairmicro.com
Disk Controller	Built-in UDMA/33	\$0	N/A
Primary Graphics	Real3D Starfighter	\$140	www.real3d.com
Secondary Graphics	Diamond Monster 3D II 8MB	\$220	www.diamondmm.com
Hard Drive	Seagate Medalist Pro 9.1	\$350	www.seagate.com
CD ROM/DVD	Pioneer DR501s 32x slot load CD drive	\$80	www.pioneerusa.com
Monitor	Optiquequest Q71	\$300	www.optiquequest.com
Primary Audio	Turtle Beach Montego	\$129	www.voyetra.com
Secondary Audio	N/A	\$0	N/A
Speakers	Boston Acoustics BA635	\$99	www.bostonacoustics.com
Modem	US Robotics V.90	\$150	www.3com.com
Networking	N/A	\$0	N/A
Case	Elan Vital T10AB	\$90	www.elanvital.com.tw
Power Supply	Built-in, 230W	\$0	N/A
Keyboard	MS Natural	\$69	www.microsoft.com/hardware
Mouse/Pointing Device	Logitech Mouseman Plus	\$59	www.logitech.com
Action Game Controller	ThrustMaster Rage3D	\$29	www.thrustmaster.com
Flight Controls	CH F16 Combat Stick	\$49	www.chproducts.com

TOTAL: **\$2,448.00**

*We have made every effort to ensure this information would be timely and accurate.

However, new hardware is constantly being released, and magazine production and distribution involves an 8-10 week delay. In cases where new products were close to release at press time, we have kept our current top choice so that we only recommend finished products we have tested. Lists compiled by Dave Salvator and Loyd Case.



Incoming™ Screenshots courtesy of EA

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—Family PC, Sept. 97

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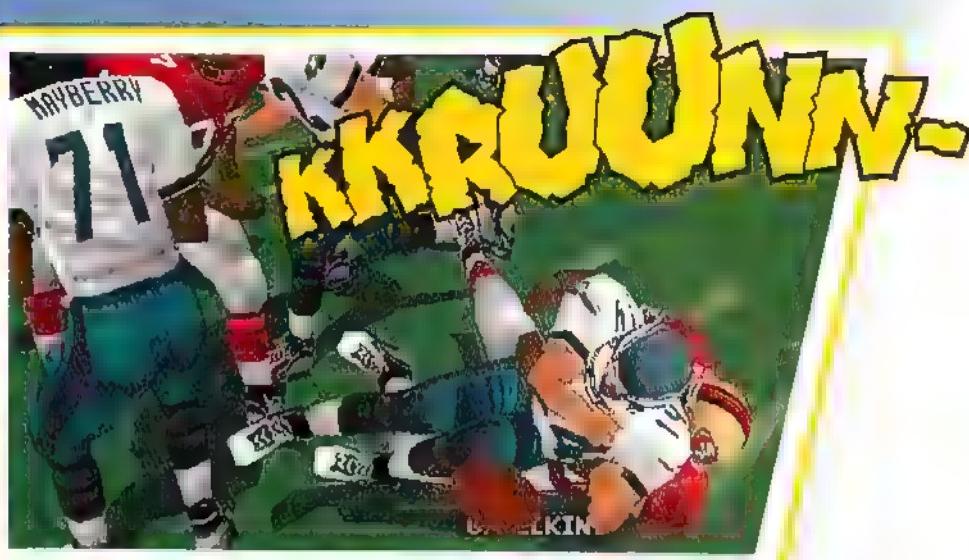
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Continued from page 193

AGP on PCI

There's a lot of buzz over AGP, as well as some disagreements as to its true merits. However, as games with huge texture sets begin showing up, it's likely that true AGP accelerators will have some benefit. But this leaves those gamers with PCI-only systems in the lurch.

Along come our friends at Real3D, the makers of the Starfighter. The Starfighter is an AGP board that uses the Intel 740 accelerator. Now, the i740 is an AGP-only part. However, the engineers at Real3D feel your pain, and have come up with a PCI version of the Starfighter. This card has a special AGP-to-PCI bridge chip. It has 8- or 16MB of texture memory (in addition to 4- or 8MB of frame buffer) that looks like AGP memory to the i740 chip.

It's Intense

Then there's the Intensor. It's an office chair with embedded speakers—up to five speakers, as a matter of fact. One speaker—the bass driver—is embedded in a compartment *underneath the seat*. The net result is a rather immersive experience, though I'm not sure I want that much immersion. The sensation underneath your tailbone is, uh, difficult to describe.

Additionally, although BSG, the folks who make the Intensor, claim that it's ergonomic, it's not all that comfortable—but then, I was tired and had been walking my feet off all day by the time I got to it. This could be an opportunity for yet another DirectX API—DirectButt.

Get a Grip

The good people at Abrams-Gentle Entertainment who



The Intensor

Tech Tips

Diamond Monster 3D II and the Compaq Presario

If you have a Compaq Presario with matching multimedia monitor, you may run into problems with a Monster 3D II. The symptoms are simple: no audio when the Monitor 3D II is attached. In fact, you may even witness that nifty volume control knob slowly turn itself down to zero.

The cause is obscure. As it turns out, Compaq uses an unused VGA pin (pin 11) to add volume control via the Presario monitor. The Monster 3D II uses only the standard VGA pins. Hence, there's no communication between the computer and the volume control on the monitor. If you're one of these users, you can contact Diamond directly for a fix at (800) 458-5846.

Note that other Voodoo2 users may encounter similar problems; contact your card vendor for assistance.

Ethernet Problems: Pauses in the Action

I mentioned this one before, but I get so much email on it that it deserves a second mention. Many users are trying to install small home networks. In the process, you may install an Ethernet card and the TCP/IP protocol.

All of a sudden, your games pause about every four minutes, for several seconds at a time. There may be several pauses in quick succession. You are the victim of the Windows 95 TCP/IP address hunt. The TCP/IP software in Windows 95 installs without an IP address. Instead, it will periodically go out (about every four minutes) and look for a Dynamic Host Configuration Protocol (DHCP) server on the network. (A DHCP server assigns dynamic IP addresses to client systems.) There are several possible fixes. First, you can hard-code IP addresses using 192.168.0.xxx; where xxx can be any three digits. Set the sub-net mask for 255.255.255.0. This set of addresses is reserved for internal-only networks. Second, you can download updated Winsock software from Microsoft. Third, if you don't need to use TCP/IP on the local network, you can go into the Network applet in Control Panel and remove the TCP/IP protocol stack that's bound to your Ethernet card.

brought you the Nintendo Power Glove are bringing an updated, higher resolution version of the Power Glove to the PC. In fact, they will be doing right-handed and left-handed versions. Imagine being able to make gestures with your hands to cast a spell in a fantasy role-playing game. Or being able to "manipulate" objects in a game with your fingers. Unfortunately, prototypes weren't ready by E3, so I have no idea what it will look like or how well it will work, but it's certainly another step

in the slow march toward virtual reality.

Dream On

Of such stuff are dreams made. An idea comes to someone in a moment of reflection or while driving through the city at night. It becomes solid, reaches toward fruition. One in a hundred become products, one in a thousand become good products. I don't know if any of these will become great products, but all of them were insights into the creative mind. **CGW**

The Next Dimension

Dell Delivers a Solid and Well-priced 440BX-based Pentium II Box

by Dave Salvator

Dell is very good at delivering a basic box. For a gamer, that means few extras such as game controllers or accelerated game cards. But the basics that Dell supplies prove to be terrific fundamental components (you can add bells and whistles to taste). New to its latest Dimension R series offering is a case that allows you to gain entry to the system's innards without tools.

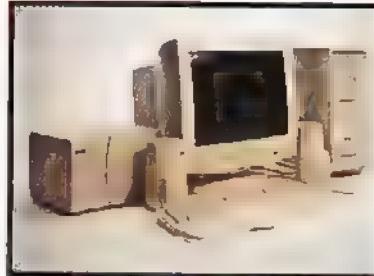
Other big changes include some components of a different stripe in the audio subsystem. Gone is any Creative Labs part, replaced by Turtle Beach's Montego PCI sound card, based on Aureal Semiconductor's Vortex 8820 audio processor. In addition to handling Windows 95 audio chores and SoundBlaster legacy compatibility, the Montego is also DirectSound 3D and A3D-compliant, meaning that game titles which use 3D positional-audio should play well. In addition, there are Altec-Lansing's AC495 speakers, which have USB controls and support Stereo, Pro-Logic, and AC-3 imaging modes. When running in the last two modes, these speakers create "phantom" rear speakers using

side-firing drivers to try to get sounds behind you.

Set up is painless, with color-coded cabling and a big honkin' poster that gives step-by-step instructions. The unit uses a Phoenix BIOS, which provides basic adjustments for system-level settings but does not offer the granularity found in, say, an Award BIOS. It's a snap to get into the case, and the interior layout makes getting at things pretty easy. I did hit one snag, however: I added a Plug-and-Play Ethernet adapter to take this guy for a spin through some multiplayer games, but when I brought the system up, the Ethernet card grabbed the DVD decoder's IRQ, and the DVD decoder in turn grabbed IRQ9, which was in use by the sound card. The result was a dysfunctional audio subsystem and an unstable system. After I went into the BIOS to reset default values and disable PnP on the Ethernet card, all was well.

Run, Joey Run

I stacked this Dimension up against our high-end, 400MHz No Holds Barred (NHB) machine (built from some of the best components available), and the Dell was consistently nipping at its heels. Both machines use RIVA 128-based AGP graphics cards, so similar numbers on WinBench and 3D WinBench, as



What's in the Box

400MHz Pentium II w/512KB integrated L2 cache; Intel motherboard with 440BX chipset; 64MB SDRAM (running at 100MHz); STB Velocity 128 4MB AGP (uses RIVA 128); Dell 1000HS 17-inch monitor (with Trinitron tube); DVD Decoder Card; 16.8GB Ultra ATA Hard-Drive; 2X DVD-ROM; Turtle Beach Montego PCI sound card; Altec-Lansing AC495 USB-controlled speakers; 56K US Robotics X2 WinModem

well as on 3D GameGauge, aren't surprising. The CPU scores were fairly close, though the edge here goes to CGW's NHB system.

There was one notable surprise from the Dell: its Business Disk WinMark score, which came in at a whopping 3,250 versus the NHB's 2,270. This number is even odder considering that Dell uses EIDE components and the CGW NHB rig uses Ultra-Wide SCSI-2 components. Turns out that Dell has devised a "disk performance driver," which the company claims has an enhanced caching algorithm; that's true to a point.

This driver does have a more involved read-ahead algorithm, meaning that it tries to speculate what piece of data an application will need, and it preloads that data into the disk cache ahead of time. Thus, when that piece of data is needed by the application, it will be read from memory.

What is somewhat dicey here is the fact that this driver locks down as much system memory as it can to make the disk cache as big as possible, and when it's running in WinBench 98, that turns out to be an unusually high amount. So while this isn't cheating per se, it may not necessarily reflect the kind of disk I/O performance you'll see when you run games or business applications. CPU usage when accessing the CD-ROM was another disappointment: The Dell came in at a very high 73.1 percent.

Bottom Line

Dell has again delivered a stout system, and what it may lack in extras it makes up for in generally solid performance. If you've already got game controllers that you're fond of, aren't interested in building your own rig, and are ready to make the move to a high-end Pentium II system, then Dell's latest will serve you well. CGW

COMPUTER GAMING WORLD



APPEAL: Gamers looking for a fast, though somewhat plain, Pentium II rig.

PROS: Solid performance; competitive price; easy-opening case.

CONS: Controllers not included; rudimentary BIOS doesn't allow for much tweaking; small Plug-and-Play headaches.

Price: \$3,189

Manufacturer: Dell Computer
Reward Rock: EAGS

www.dell.com

PERFORMANCE BENCHMARKS

WinBench

	DISK BENCHMARK	3D GAMEBENCH	WINBENCH	CPU-Z!	3D WINBENCH	CD ROM
CGW No Holds Barred*	679	1000	2000	1030	2000	1760
Dell XPS-R400	678	999	1999	955	2018	977

3D GameGauge (800x600)

	FORSAKEN	INCOMING TURK	QUAKE	QUAKE II	F22AOF	Score
CGW No Holds Barred*	580	57.21	39.40	40.00	40.00	234.55
Dell XPS-R400	580	57.17	37.20	38.00	38.00	220.78

*CGW's High-end Ultimate Game Machine

1 1024x768 resolution with 16,000 colors

How We Test To test a gaming system, we put it through a wide array of tests, starting with WinBench 98 which tests each sub-system's performance: 2D graphics, CPU integer and floating-point, hard-disk, and CD-ROM. We then run 3D WinBench 98 to test the system's 3D performance and see how well rendering features are implemented. Finally, to see how well a system performs running 3D games, we run our own 3D GameGauge, a collection of six games—four three-DOF, two OpenGL. The GameGauge score is the sum of the six games' frame rates.

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Not So Wicked After All

by Loyd Case

When I first read the press release on Metabyte's new "enhanced geometry engine" included in the Wicked3D, I was intrigued. But sadly, it turned out to be something of a smoke screen. What the software mavens at Metabyte have done is replaced Direct3D's geometry pipeline (in DirectX 5) with one of their own design.

At first, this sounds like a great idea, given that the Voodoo²

chipset is often waiting for the CPU to give it more triangles to draw. But when you realize that there are currently only about six games in the world that use the DirectX 5 geometry pipeline, it's easy to get cynical. I suppose that running LEGO ISLAND faster is a good thing. Curiously, one app that does use the DirectX



5 geometry pipeline is 3D WinBench 98. Suddenly it all became clear.

The Wicked 3D posted the single highest 3D WinBench 98 score

we've ever seen, 1,150 on a 400MHz Pentium II. Games—at least, the games most of us play—get no boost at all. In fact, the Wicked3D is in every way a 3Dfx reference board clone. I was able to compare the 3D Game-Gauge performance of the Wicked3D to a number of other Voodoo² boards. While its performance put Wicked3D in the top half, the board was not the fastest by any measure. Since Metabyte's marketing pushes the 3D WinBench number quite hard, I can only conclude that the "geometry acceleration" is just a benchmark tweak of the worst kind.

At the time we tested the board, the bundle was not yet determined. Since Metabyte charges pretty much full price for the board, it's really no bargain. For your \$300, you get the illusion of enhanced performance, but your games see just another reference board design. CGW

TEST SYSTEM CGW's No-Holds-Barred Machine (Pentium II 400MHz)					
3DWINE98	FORSAKEN	INCOMING	TUROK	QUAKE II	3DGAMEGAUGE
640x480 100% 100% 100%	150	139.54	79.93	74.95	362
800x600 100% 100% 100%	150	139.54	79.93	74.95	362

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COMPUTER GAMING WORLD

★★★☆☆

APPEAL:
People who want to run 3D WinBench 98 really fast.



PROS: Solid reference board design.

CONS: "Geometry acceleration" is pretty much marketing hype for now; price.

SYSTEM REQUIREMENTS: One free PCI slot.

Price \$299
Manufacturer Metabyte
Fremont, CA
(510) 994-9700
www.wicked3d.com

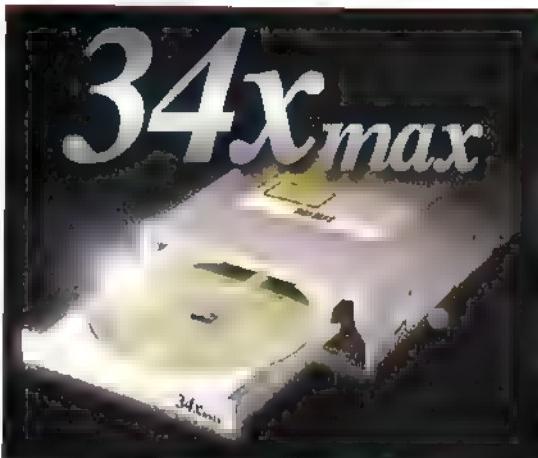
Racing to a Crawl

Long Spin-up Times Turn Speedy Drive Into Gaming Slug

by Loyd Case

When I first installed the ASUS CD-S340 drive, I was blown away by its initial benchmark scores and by how quietly this drive runs. It turned out to be a perfect case of an imperfect first impression. On WinBench 98's CD WinMark, the drive consistently got scores in the high 1,700s with an access time of under 90msec—no slouch, to be sure. But as I used the drive more and more, I felt as if I was in one of those whirlwind courtships that suddenly go sour as you find out that the other person adores country music when you want to go see *Pirates of Penzance*.

The system I used for testing originally had a relatively sedate 20x CD-ROM drive, so stepping up to a 34x drive seemed like a breath of fresh air. Huge game installs went quickly—or so it seemed. Then some truths began to reveal themselves, like one of those *X-Files* episodes in which you discover that the likable young cop is really an ancient demon.



The first wort was the dreaded spin-delay. Some ATA CD-ROM drives have a slight delay when they spin up. This can happen often, as most drives spin down

game, but downright aggravating in some action games.

Then there's the much-vaunted UltraATA support. Certainly it seemed to work in UltraATA mode

after about two minutes. The S340 seems to take longer to spin up than most—as much as 3–4 seconds in some cases. This delay was mildly annoying in the midst of a turn-based

fine on ASUS motherboards, but several other motherboards often locked up when accessing the CD after enabling DMA mode in the Windows control panel. Disabling the DMA mode solved the problem, but it also lowered performance. The S340 also lacks clips to hold the CD in place, so you can't mount the drive sideways.

The ASUS has some things going for it. The company built in some serious vibration damping, so there's none of that annoying buzzing you get with some CD-ROMs. But that's hardly enough. The S340 may be a fine drive for a business user who might install software occasionally and play audio CDs. Serious gamers, however, ought to give this one a bye. **CGW**

COMPUTER GAMING WORLD

★★★★★

APPEAL: People looking to install software fairly quickly

PROS: Great benchmark scores; UltraATA support; competitive price

CONS: Spin-up delays make this a frustrating drive for gamers; lock-ups on non ASUS motherboards

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GRAVIS

Diamond's Sound Investment

by Loyd Case

One of the holy grails of wavetable MIDI synthesizers in sound cards (for me, anyway) has been the samples used in Roland wavetable audio. But the availability of those samples for the PC game player has been scarce because Roland has pulled back

from the multimedia market. The 4MB hardware wavetable on the MX200, created by Dream, Inc. for Diamond, uses samples licensed from Roland. The result is some of the best native wavetable patches I've heard in a sound card in a long time. Since Microsoft is creating DirectMusic—and API for creating dynamic music scores for games through MIDI—it's likely that good MIDI may be undergoing a renaissance.

The digital audio on the Diamond card is no slouch either. This card handles audio chores with aplomb, whether the audio source is CD music or low resolution .WAV files. When I cranked up the volume without playing any sound, the result was sweet silence—no annoying hash, crackles, or other artifacts.



Diamond uses an Analog Devices DSP (digital signal processor) to handle the audio processing chores. Analog Devices licensed Aureal's A3D technology and it works pretty well. In addition to 3D positional audio using two speakers, the MX200 supports two additional speakers. We'll probably see more four-speaker support in future games, since DirectSound 3D has four-speaker capability. There's the usual software bundle, including full versions of

OUTLAWS and the now-familiar IN-COMING. In its latest driver release, Diamond has fixed many of the problems with digital game controllers. We were able to successfully get the Microsoft Freestyle and Thrust-Master Rage 3D gamepads working with the MX200 (but be sure to read the READ.ME file in the updated driver set).

The MX200 is a polished card with a terrific hardware synth engine, a clean digital-audio section, and better support for game controllers. About the only thing missing is support for the new DLS (downloadable sample) standard, but the jury's still out on whether that standard will take hold in the gaming world. CGW



Look Ma, No Jumpers

by Loyd Case

If late, we've seen a flurry of 440BX motherboards come to market. And while most deliver comparable performance, there's often very little to

set one apart from the crowd. That's not the case with Abit's new BX6; it's very different from the plethora of 440BX motherboards with its jumper-free design and the ability to tweak the BIOS, right down to the CPU voltage.

The Abit BX6 is a little larger than the ASUS P2B we looked at last month, so it's a tighter fit in smaller cases. It has one AGP slot, four PCI slots, and three ISA slots (one ISA/PCI pair is shared). Once you install your CPU, RAM, and expansion cards, the system boots into the BIOS the first time. You set the clock speed in the system BIOS. Now, I don't advocate overclocking your system, but if you're into that sort of thing, this BIOS is terrific. You can adjust the CPU core voltage in 0.05 volt increments, which allows you to crank the voltage down a tad if you boost



the clock rate. But you must know what you're doing. Some PCI cards do not like it if your system is overclocked. Even some games don't like it; there have been reports that UNREAL runs slower on systems with overclocked CPUs or overclocked 3Dfx cards. The general rule with overclocking is this: When in doubt, don't. However, this board will revert to a default 2.0v, 233MHz if the CPU isn't running properly.

Even if you don't overclock it, the jumperless feature is nice, because upgrades become a snap. At a minimum, the BX6 will support up to a 450MHz Pentium II. In other respects, it's not quite as polished as the ASUS board, but it's still a good pick for those into do-it-yourself systems. CGW

COMPUTER GAMING WORLD

★★★★★

APPEAL: Gamers who like to tweak their systems.

PROS: Jumperless feature makes system setup very easy; tremendous granularity for system tweaking; good documentation.

CONS: It's easy to get into trouble if you're not careful; a bit on the large side.

Price: \$170
Manufacturer: Abit
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www.abit.com.tw

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- Integrated 32-voice Wavetable 3D stereo sound
- Advent AV009 stereo speakers
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HARDCORE SYSTEMS

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- 64MB PC100 SDRAM
- 8.4GB Ultra ATA hard drive
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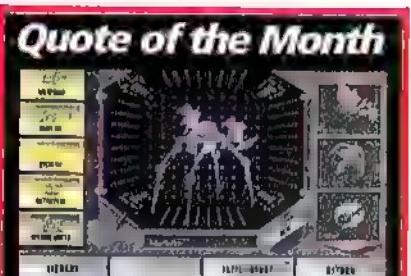
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Cut Through the Hype for Our In-depth Look



The Deepest Operational Wargame Ever?



"The flawed logic and limited playability aside, this still would have been a decent game if it weren't for the terrible interface and the bugs."

—Lance Larka reviewing
EXTREME TACTICS

How Do We Rate? We review only finished products, not prerelease versions. The ratings are as follows:



Outstanding The rare game that gets it all right. A must-play experience.



Very Good Worthy of your time and money, but there are drawbacks.



Average Either an ambitious design with major flaws, or simply vanilla.



Weak Seriously lacking in play value, poorly conceived, or just another clone.



Absmal The rare game that gets it all wrong. Pathetic. Coaster material.

This Month CGW Editors' Choice games are indicated in red.

GAME	RATING	PAGE
747 Precision Simulator	★★★★★	247
Army Men	★★★★★	229
Comanche Gold	★★★★★	247
Extreme Tactics	★★★☆☆	262
F22 ADF Red Sea Operations	★★★★★	247
Game, Net & Match	★★★★★	264
Industry Giant	★★★★★	261
Monster Truck Madness 2	★★★★★	228
OPERATIONAL ART OF WAR	★★★★★	250
Quake II: The Reckoning	★★★★★	224
SANITARIUM	★★★★★	238
Sorry	★★★★★	267
Spec Ops: Rangers Lead the Way	★★★★★	225
Starship Titanic	★★★★★	236
Team Apache	★★★★★	240
Ultimate 3D Puzzle	★★★★★	267
Ultimate IQ Test	★★★★★	267
Unreal	★★★★★	220
World Cup Monopoly	★★★★★	266
The X-Files	★★★★★	230

The Game Genres

Our reviews are categorized by genre. Not every game fits neatly into a single genre, but here's how we define the categories in general:

Action Games that emphasize fast gameplay over story or strategy.

Adventure Games that require you to solve puzzles to move through a story line.

Classics/Puzzle Classics are old standbys such as Chess and MONOPOLY. Puzzle games emphasize problem solving without requiring gamers to follow a story.

Role-Playing A subset of adventure games, these stress character development through attributes. The gameworld tends to be large; the plot less linear.

Simulations Highly realistic games from a first person perspective, including flight sims and space simulations.

Sports A broad genre encompassing action sports games such

as NBA LIVE, strategic sports games such as FPS FOOTBALL, and even driving games such as CART PRECISION RACING.

Strategy Problem-solving and planning are the keys here. These games emphasize resource and risk-management. Includes conflict-based sci-fi and fantasy games as well as construction programs like SIMCITY.

Wargames A subset of strategy games, these re-create historical conflicts from a command perspective. They may be tactical, operational, or strategic.

CENTURION

This fruit basket looks absolutely delicious. It's awfully nice of you to have me deliver it to your arch rival. I thought you hated each other?

I wonder if anyone would notice an apple missing...

PIG FARMER

Gotta wash the stench of horse manure out of my clothes in time for church! There will be a lot of single ladies at Venus' temple tonight. Rumor has it the priest is going to denounce birth control!

PRIEST

Dedicating the temple to Venus was a smart move. Church attendance hasn't been this high in years. Then again, neither has the city's population.

I'm being trapped in the slums for riot control. They tipped me a good sum for some fresh meat.

LISTEN TO YOUR PEOPLE!



- Build, rule and battle on one screen—no more switching between city, province and battle screens!

- Visual feedback: The real-time effects of the player's actions are immediately visible on screen.

- Various terrain sets include deserts, forests, mountains and multiple elevations.

- Construct temples to various gods of the Roman Pantheon and witness the effects on your city.

- More progressive career structure and intuitive interface mean more exciting, longer lasting gameplay.

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THINGS TO DO TODAY

- I. ROUND UP PRISONERS FOR THE LION PITS.
- II. VISIT FORUM TO ASSESS CITY'S FINANCES.
- III. PRACTICE WAVING TO THE PEOPLE (IN ADORING FASHION).
- IV. HIRE VOICE COACH TO HELP PRACTICE EVIL LAUGHTER.
- V. MEET WITH CHIEF ARCHITECT/ARTISANS TO DISCUSS NEW COLOSSEUM.
- VI. SEND RIVAL A BASKET OF POISONED FRUIT.
- VII. INSPECT GLADIATORS FOR THIS THURSDAY'S BLOODFEST
AT THE COLOSSEUM.
- VIII. RAISE TAXES TO FUND MORE TAX COLLECTORS.
- IX. LECTURE PUBLIC ON BENEFITS OF PROCREATING.
- X. HIRE MORE VIGILS TO PATROL THE SLUMS.
- XI. MEET CLEOPATRA FOR DINNER (THIS MIGHT BE THE NIGHT!)
- XII. STAGE A FUNNY THING TO HAPPEN ON THE WAY TO THE FORUM.
- XIII. ABSOLUTELY DON'T FORGET TO...

CGW Reviews Index

These Are the Games We Have Reviewed in the Last Three Months

ACTION

ADVENTURE

SCIENCE FICTION

SPORTS

STRATEGY/WARGAMES

Game	Publisher	Month	Page	CGW Rating
Battlezone	Activision	June	184	★★★★★
Deathmatch Maker 2	Virtus	June	196	★★★★★
Die by the Sword	Interplay	August	174	★★★★★
Forsaken	Acclaim	August	178	★★★★★
Interstate '76: Arsenal	Activision	June	189	★★★★★
Grand Theft Auto	ASC Games	July	152	★★★★★
Hexen II: Portal of Praevus	Activision	July	148	★★★★★
Juggernaut	Canopy Games	June	192	★★★★★
Outwars	Microsoft	August	176	★★★★★
Shadow Master	Psygnosis	July	146	★★★★★
Touring Car Championship	Sega	June	194	★★★★★
Ultimate Race Pro	MicroProse	July	144	★★★★★
Black Dahlia	Interplay	July	154	★★★★★
Might & Magic VI	3DO	August	180	★★★★★
Of Light & Darkness	Interplay	June	202	★★★★★
Tex Murphy: Overseer	Access Software	June	197	★★★★★
Bridge Deluxe II with Omar Sharif	Interplay	August	224	★★★★★
Creatures Life Kit #1	Mudscape	June	260	★★★★★
Kuba	Patch	August	224	★★★★★
Mastermind	Hasbro	August	224	★★★★★
Pharaoh's Ascent	Ambertech	June	260	★★★★★
Star Trek Pinball	Interplay	June	188	★★★★★
F-15	Jane's/EA	July	160	★★★★★
IF-22 Persian Gulf vs.0	Interactive Magic	July	162	★★★★★
M-1 Tank Platoon II	MicroProse	August	185	★★★★★
Panzer Commander	SSI	August	194	★★★★★
Search and Rescue	Intense Entertainment	June	204	★★★★★
Deer Hunter	WizardWorks/GT	July	166	★★★★★
F1 Racing Simulation	Ubisoft	July	164	★★★★★
FIFA Road to World Cup 98	EA Sports	June	208	★★★★★
Front Page Sports Ski Racing	Sierra	August	214	★★★★★
HardBall 6	Accolade	August	208	★★★★★
High Heat	3DO	August	204	★★★★★
The Golf Pro	Empire	August	211	★★★★★
Triple Play 99	EA Sports	August	202	★★★★★
World Cup 98	EA Sports	August	201	★★★★★
Armor Command	Ronin Entertainment	June	245	★★★★★
ChronX	Genetic Anomalies	August	220	★★★★★
Dark Reign Expansion... Shadowhand	Activision	July	195	★★★★★
Deadlock II	Accolade	June	257	★★★★★
Dragoon	Art of War	July	197	★★★★★
East Front Campaign CD 1	TalonSoft	July	195	★★★★★
Great Battles of Julius Caesar	Interactive Magic	July	184	★★★★★
Liberation Day	Interactive Magic	August	221	★★★★★
Semper Fi	Interactive Magic	June	254	★★★★★
Soldiers at War	SSI	August	216	★★★★★
StarCraft	Blizzard	July	168	★★★★★
Star Wars Rebellion	LucasArts	July	172	★★★★★
Storm in the West	Schwerpunkt	June	258	★★★★★
Total Annihilation: Core Contingency	Cave Dog	August	217	★★★★★
WarBreed	Red Orb	July	189	★★★★★
Warhammer: Dark Oman	EA	July	178	★★★★★

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Real Close

UNREAL Packs a Major Wallop, But Misses on Some Basics

by Dan Fitzpatrick

The first thing you notice about *UNREAL* is the stunningly realistic effects generated by Epic's proprietary "Fire Engine." You may find yourself stopping repeatedly to gape, open-mouthed, at lava. You may accidentally drown while mesmerized beneath the beautifully undulating surface of a pond. The game has fog and mist, realistic halos around lights, awesome textures—I could go on and on, but what's the point? Let's just say that everything you've heard about the engine is true. Of course, you'd better be packing a 3Dfx card. Without one, while the software rendering and frame-rates are impressive, you'll be missing a lot of what makes this game exciting.

COMPUTER GAMING WORLD



APPEAL: 3D-shooter fans looking for the next big thing.



PROS: Killer engine; tough monsters; great variety.

CONS: Lackluster weapons, uneven level design; ho-hum multiplayer play.

DIFFICULTY: Intermediate

REQUIREMENTS: Pentium 166 (233MMX recommended), 16MB RAM, 100MB hard-drive space, 4x CD-ROM, SVGA graphics. 3Dfx Voodoo or Voodoo² recommended.

3D SUPPORT: 3Dfx Voodoo and Voodoo² (Voodoo Rush not supported), PowerVR.

MULTIPLAYER SUPPORT: LAN and Internet (2–16 players); 1 CD per player.

Price: \$54.95

Publisher: GT Interactive
New York, NY
(212) 726-6500

www.gtinteractive.com

But even discounting the engine, *UNREAL* rocks. From a gameplay standpoint, *UNREAL* is as good or better than *QUAKE II* or *JEDI KNIGHT*. But it has enough problems to keep it from achieving the greatness of which it was capable. The level design is great—awesome in places—but it suffers from unevenness. The weapons have serious problems. Plus, the pace is pretty slow for the first few levels, so stay in tourist mode and enjoy the scenery.

Color Me Busy

The textures are expertly done and realistic—due in part to the fact that many began as photographs of the real thing. But the often unrestrained use of color detracts from the textures. It's as if the *UNREAL* team looked at the id games and said, "Why is everything brown and gray?" and then went too far in the other direction. Admittedly, *QUAKE II* is a little colorless, but it seems more realistic in the end, because *UNREAL*'s bright, oversaturated colors continually remind you that you're in a game. Also, many times, the game uses too many different textures in a given building or area, which creates a jumbled-looking environment that doesn't jibe with reality.

Some of the levels were hard to



RUN AWAY! A vital *UNREAL* skill is the ability to shoot while running backward in panic. Unlike the monsters in *QUAKE II*, these guys are just as fast as you are.

navigate, and there were four or five instances in which I actually had to get a pencil and paper to map the level in order to find my way out. That might add to the fun if you're expecting it, but I wasn't; and since I would map only after becoming completely frustrated, I didn't feel it was a positive aspect of gameplay. Cleverly concealed exits were part of the problem, but it was also because of intentional mazelike design, which I despise.

On balance, however, many of the levels are extremely well done, and the game got much better as it went along. In my estimation, the highs of level design combined with the superior engine definitely exceed those of *QUAKE II*. Another

positive aspect of *UNREAL*'s apparent "more is better" philosophy is the refreshing amount of variety in level locale, which keeps the game interesting. You travel through mines, ancient temples, space ships, military bases, villages,



COLOR MY WORLD Lots of color is pretty, but it's here where *UNREAL* unintentionally lives up to its name.

churches—just about any environment we've seen in a shooter is represented here, and the transitions are handled amazingly well.

Just Shoot Me

The weapons array is problematic. *UNREAL* has more interesting weapons than *QUAKE II*, but there is too much variety (yes, that's a negative), and it's hard to tell which weapons are the most effective, even after playing for hours. Is the upgraded Dispersion Pistol more deadly than the Stinger? Which is more lethal: the Jelly Gun (the "GESBioRifle") grenades or the 8-Ball grenades? Dunno. This lack of clear hierarchy in weapons capabilities is a serious weakness. It's okay to have a multitude of different weapons as long as there's a clear reason to choose one over the other.



MMM... LAVA... The liquid effects generated by Epic's "Fire Engine" are stunning, even viewed in still pictures.

in a given situation; this is what makes tactical weapons choices a big part of the fun in a shooter.

One huge miscalculation regarding weapons balancing is the Amplifier. Basically, it's a super quad damage that you can turn on and off. Judicious use (it runs out) lets you easily dispatch almost all of the bosses in the game. Like the Invulnerability power-up in QUAKE II, this basically ruins the game unless you choose not to use it, which requires uncommon discipline.

Eat My Peashooter!

By far the worst problem with the weapons, however, is their sound. Weapon sounds gotta be *loud*, much louder than the ambient sounds in the game. That's part of the fun of a gun: It goes *Bang!* The guns of UNREAL don't go *Bang*—they whimper. Also, many of the effects could have been much more dangerous-sounding. The worst is the Minigun. I assume it's supposed to be powerful since it took me 10-plus hours of gameplay to get it, but it sounds and inflicts damage as if it's shooting little packets of air. The GESBioRifle sounds like it's passing gas.

Speaking of the GESBioRifle, which is (apparently) one of the most powerful weapons, I used it only as a last resort because I simply hated it. Accustomed to the manly heft of rocket launchers and rail guns, I just couldn't see any fun in spitting little blobs of mint jelly

at an attacking Skaarj, even when it would save my life. To make matters worse, the monsters don't react audibly or visibly when hit by this weapon until they suddenly die.

On a more positive note, all weapons have a secondary attack feature, which greatly enriches the tactical possibilities of battle. The rocket launcher (the nicely named "8-Ball Launcher") doubles as a grenade launcher in secondary mode, and the shrapnel gun turns into a shrapnel grenade gun, which is good when the enemy is farther away. An excellent feature, used well in N64's GOLDENEYE and also a popular QUAKE II mod, is the secondary fire of the Assault Rifle: It's a variable-magnification scope view, excellent for picking off patrolling Krall from a distance.

Some of the dissatisfaction with UNREAL's weapons fades after a few hours of gameplay and, sound notwithstanding, there are some gratifying weapons here. I learned to love the RazorJack, which makes a very nice shredding sound as it lops off a monster's head, leaving the monster groping comically for its lost noggin before expiring.

A Little Too Smart

It was hoped that UNREAL's AI would do new tricks (Steven Polge, creator of the Reaperbot QUAKE mod, is on the team), and to some extent it does. Mostly, though, the AI improvement consists of making the monsters faster. This is a big



GIVE US A KISS The ASMD is a nice instantaneous-fire weapon, but does it pack more punch than the RazorJack?



ENDURANCE TEST Fighting a Titan is a matter of unloading your ammunition while staying out of its way.

improvement over the pitifully slow beasts of QUAKE II, whom you could circle around and decapitate from behind. Not only can't you run in UNREAL, you also can't hide, and this is where the game baldly cheats: The monsters always turn to face you even when they can't see you, so when you reappear from behind a crate, they already have a rocket on the way.

Some monsters are smarter than others, and Mercenaries, in particular, seem to exhibit botlike tactics—even teamwork. In one battle with a pair of Mercs, which seemed to go on for minutes, one kept me pinned down with rocket fire while the other circled for a better angle, using an elevator in the process. It was a convincing and thoroughly involving fight, one I wanted to experience again immediately.

The monsters have also learned to counter the common tactic of using the doorway to one's advantage. Usually you can just pick off

monsters one by one as they come through, but these guys get in the room quickly and step to the side in order to let their buddies get through. Monsters also effectively used cover in some instances and retreated when near death.

Although the AI is improved over that of QUAKE II, it's still inconsistent. Monsters often don't patrol, they just stay "frozen" until triggered, usually by being shot. Monsters who have taken cover often don't recognize that they are being pummeled from around the corner by grenades or razor blades, and are easily killed.

Some things that should not be intelligent, are. Time after time I could not go through a door until I had killed a certain monster. Whatever happened to having a monster drop a key? Doors that magically unlock when a monster dies destroy the realism that designers are presumably working to create.

Despite these criticisms, UNREAL's single-player game is as good as anything I've seen so far, and is arguably better. In the end, it's a matter of taste. But it had potential to be so much more. In addition to the single-player problems, the hefty system requirements (in the READ.ME file, Epic admits you'd be happiest with a Pentium II), lingering complaints of laggy Internet play, and less-than-thrilling multiplayer action (even on a LAN) drag this game back to reality. **CGR**



ARCHITECTURAL DIGEST Although inconsistent, some of the level design, like that of the Nali castle, is outstanding.

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Reckon We've Seen This Before

The Latest QUAKE II Add-on Is No SCOURGE OF ARMAGON

by Thierry Nguyen

Playing this first official Mission Pack for QUAKE II is like watching a movie about unsung heroes in war. Sure, the original QUAKE II marine may have wasted most of the Strogg army and assassinated their leader and hopped away, but he wasn't the only marine doing his job. QUAKE II: THE RECKONING shows you the story of another marine (who was knocked off course during the drop) and his hefty contribution to the cause.

Colonial Marines Are the Baddest

RECKONING puts you through four hubs, with a grand total of 18

levels. These hubs cover goals such as securing your position, coordinating an air strike, stowing away on a freighter, and destroying a hidden moon base. Seven new DeathMatch levels offer variety, and you can even play through the game cooperatively.

The level designs flow a little better than those in the original game—so it's harder to get lost or sidetracked—and the designers have played around with the architecture by using collapsing beams, falling stalactites, and an exploding refinery. Outdoor environments feature decent-looking canyons and caves, pushing the limits of the QUAKE II engine. Overall, RECKONING offers more levels with some nice additions evident in the later levels: I found the Moonbase level with its cavernous interior and lower gravity to be particularly fun.

Double Your Fun—Maybe

RECKONING gives you two new weapons, two new items, and

two new enemies. Of the two new weapons, one is a bit disappointing, while the other is very cool. The phalanx cannon is little more than a glorified rocket launcher; it will, however, satisfy those gamers annoyed with the standard rocket's slow speed and reload rate. The ion ripper, on the other hand, has ricocheting projectiles that work excellently in multiplayer games (and in smaller rooms in the single-player game).

The two new items are pretty good. The Trap is a wonderful item, as it converts enemies into health cubes; sadly, Traps are rare to come by. The Quadfire item is also useful, because it quadruples your firing rate, making the rail gun easier to use and turning the chain gun and hyper blaster into true room-clearers.

Only one of the new enemies is done well; the other could stand much improvement. The Gekk, inspired by *Aliens*, is the fiend of

QUAKE II. It has the added benefits of acidic blood, and it can heal itself if needed. Having a Gekk jump on you in the dark brings back the "Oh, crap!" factor, and they also have a nice swimming animation.

The Repairbot, though, proved to be a huge disappointment. Every one I saw just floated there. I did see one heal a dead enemy or two, but overall, in my experience, their presence was minimal—and forgettable.

The rest of the enemies are buffed-up in terms of new weaponry or new shielding. The Super Tank now has shields, the gladiator has shield and a phalanx cannon, the Iron Maiden has seeking rockets, and even the grunt uses hyperblasters and accurate laser rifles. The enemies populated the levels, and at times, their sheer numbers and accuracy were a bit much.

QUAKE II diehards should enjoy this Mission Pack. The rest of us have been there before, and the lure of one cool new weapon or enemy may not be enough to entice us back. *CGW*

COMPUTER
GAMING
WORLD



APPEAL: QUAKE II junkies.

PROS: Nice level design; one nice weapon addition; good elements of changing architecture; one cool new enemy.



CONS: More of the same; the other new enemy and weapon aren't so hot; the improved QUAKE II enemies are a bit too plentiful in some levels.

DIFFICULTY: Intermediate.

REQUIREMENTS: Pentium 90 or better; Windows 95, 16 MB RAM (24 MB for QUAKE II), 100MB hard-drive space, 4x CD ROM, Windows 95-compatible sound and video cards, original QUAKE II.

3D SUPPORT: OpenGL.

MULTIPLAYER SUPPORT: TCP/IP and LAN (2–16 players); 1 CD per player.

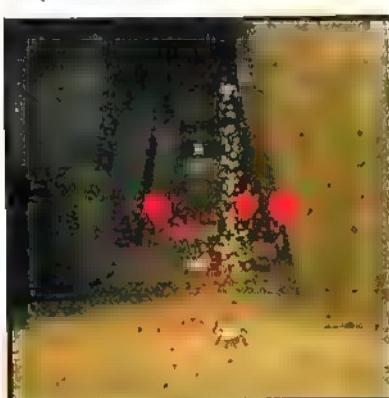
Price: \$29.95

Publisher: id Software
Dallas, TX
(800) idgames

www.idsoftware.com



LEAN, MEAN, AND GREEN You need the hefty Phalanx Cannon in order to take on the now-shielded Super Tank.



GOING STROGG HUNTING Lay the Trap on the floor like a mine and let it turn your foes into food.

Rangers in the Rough

Zombie's Ranger Game Isn't Quite So Special

by Thierry Nguyen

Special operations groups within the military have been the subject of numerous novels, films, and even games: Remember EA's SEAL TEAM? SPEC OPS: RANGERS LEAD THE WAY is the first of a planned series by Zombie Studios focusing on various special operations forces throughout the world, such as the Green Berets, the SAS, and even the SEALS. Problem is, the game does not live up to the standards of the forces it depicts—at least until you download the patch.

Your Mission, Should You Choose to Accept It

SPEC OPS takes place in various locations around the world, and the game is broken down into



APPEAL: 3rd-person action gamers into movies like *Navy SEALs* or *The Rock*.

PROS: Well-done, immersive environment; realistic weapons and tools, has more gameplay than your average shooter.

CONS: Bad software engine; annoying timer; you can control only two Rangers; no mapping; mediocre AI; needs patch.

DIFFICULTY: Intermediate.

REQUIREMENTS: Pentium 166, 16MB RAM, Windows 95, 60MB hard-drive space, 8x CD-ROM, DirectX 5-compatible sound- and video cards, DirectX 5.

3D SUPPORT: 3Dfx Glide

MULTIPLAYER SUPPORT: None.

Price: \$49.95
Publisher: Ripcord Games
San Diego, CA
(800) 797-5867

www.ripcordgames.com



DON'T EAT THE YELLOW SNOW Unlike the coloring effect in most shooters, those in SPEC OPS aren't there just for show; the Rangers are even appropriately outfitted.

five phases, each having an overall goal. A phase is then divided into three or four missions, which range from hostage rescue to the demolition of strategic targets. Before each phase, you get a video briefing and a list of objectives; you then pick two Rangers for the mission.

SPEC OPS models outdoor terrain quite well in daylight and at night. Both Rangers and enemies are suitably outfitted for the environment in question, and the enemies even speak the correct language. The weapons sound authentic, and the small touches, such as a variety of sniper scopes, add to the overall immersion.

The third-person perspective isn't anything new—and there are some DOOM-like aspects (such as picking up ammunition and medikits)—but SPEC OPS does require more strategy than is the norm for this genre. You can run around with guns blazing if you desire, but you'll soon find that it's better to exercise caution and stealth.

Fire in the Hole

It's disappointing, then, that several flaws creep in to prevent SPEC OPS from rising above the crowd. Rangers generally work in

teams of four, yet you control only two Rangers at a time. Supposedly this is a control issue, but I usually found my Ranger buddy to be like a wingman in a flight sim. So,



NIGHT MOVES SPEC OPS allows you to use a variety of cool equipment, such as this night-vision sniper scope.

couldn't there be more than two Rangers, perhaps with you controlling the team leader?

The AI needs some work. Both the Rangers and the enemy forces attempt to use terrain to their advantage, but often end up out of position. The computer opponent also likes to fire weapons in the general direction of its foe, disregarding any obstacles (like walls) that make such actions useless. The timer is a bit on the aggravating side as well; it discourages exploration, and it's sometimes unfair. Also, those of us without a 3Dfx card (other 3D support is planned for a later patch) will be treated to a horrendously slow software engine.

After SPEC OPS' release, a series of patches fixed technical issues and featured vastly improved gameplay: randomized enemies, a more-forgiving timer, and better stealth modeling. I hope Zombie and Ripcord have learned their lesson, so that the initial release for their upcoming Green Beret game will be ready to play in its initial release. CGW



FIRE & RAIN From booby traps to weather effects, SPEC OPS has visuals to spare.

In 1968, they changed the rules of Grand Prix racing
to cut down on driver fatalities.

GRAND PRIX LEGENDS



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Off-road Obstacles

MONSTER TRUCK MADNESS 2 Improves on the Original—But the Lack of Tournaments Is a Real Drag

by Scott May

When you first fire up your engine, Microsoft's MONSTER TRUCK MADNESS 2 (MTM2) seems like more fun than a new set of mud flaps. It's a definite improvement over the original MONSTER TRUCK MADNESS, though it can't match the sophistication of CART PRECISION RACING, Terminal Reality's other title for Microsoft.

MTM2 includes 14 tracks: 11 single-player rally and circuit races, and 3 multiplayer arena tracks.



APPEAL:
Racing fans who enjoy getting down and dirty.



PROS:
Improved 3D graphics, sound, and performance; nice variety of tracks and trucks; excellent controls; multiplayer arena duels.

CONS: Repetitive action; limited vehicle setup; no track editor; no tournament or drag race mode.

DIFFICULTY: Intermediate.

REQUIREMENTS: Pentium 133 (superseded by Pentium II MMX with AGP), Windows 95/98/NT, 16MB RAM (32MB recommended), 30MB hard-drive space, 4x CD-ROM drive (6x recommended), SVGA graphics, mouse; supports racing wheel/pedals, force-feedback devices, and Windows 95-compatible sound cards and joysticks.

3D SUPPORT: Direct3D.

MULTIPLAYER SUPPORT: Modem (2 players); IPX or TCP/IP (2-8 players); 1 CD per player.

Price: \$54.95
Publisher: Microsoft
Redmond, WA
(206) 882-8080

www.microsoft.com



THIS AIN'T THE FIRESTONE 500 MTM2 hits pay dirt when it comes to raucous, in-your-face fun—but I miss having tournaments.

Rallies tend to include more off-road obstacles, such as water, rocks, and mud; circuit tracks, more flat-out racing. Both circuit and rally races can be set up to 20 laps in length. The solo tracks range from the mundane *Farm Road 29* to the maniacal *Breakneck Ridge*, with the occasional touch of fantasy (*The Graveyard* and *Voodoo Island*). Regardless of the setting, each course is reasonably long and heavy on variety. In other words, even the most jaded off-roader will find long-term challenges here.

King of the Hill

New to the series are multiplayer courses, which feature an arena-style setting in which up to

eight gamers compete in thumb-blistering action. Measured in minutes (up to 20) instead of laps, the emphasis here isn't on beating the track, but rather beating up on your opponents to become King of the Hill. It's rowdy and fun, but ultimately less satisfying—and infinitely more claustrophobic—than the outdoor venues.

Unfortunately, the designers left out two exciting racing options from the original game: drag races and tournaments. Okay, drag racing in monster trucks is no great loss, but tournament play—the ability to create a custom mix of drag, rally, and circuit races—is sorely missed here. However, with the exception of drag races, you

can use any of the original game's courses in MTM2, with a slight degradation in graphic quality.

Graphics in MTM2 are much more polished than those of the original, which suffered from polygon clipping, horrific terrain pop-ups, and perfunctory 3D effects. This time out, gamers have a choice of software-only rendering,



BIG TRUCK, TINY TOOLS Even in an arcade racer, monster truck fans deserve more than MTM2's limited vehicle setup options.

Direct3D, or 3Dfx hardware acceleration. On a Pentium 233 MMX with Monster 3D and all graphic amenities turned on, MTM2 ran extremely smooth, with tight, responsive controls and high frame-rates. Nine new variable weather conditions—from blue skies to pitch black night, and everything in-between—not only spice up the visuals, but add more challenges, depending on the track.

Road Wrassling

Player controls are also much improved this time around, supporting force-feedback joysticks for the ultimate off-road kick. I also found InterAct's UltraRacer PC, a joystick-mounted mini-steering wheel, to be especially responsive. On the other hand, truck setups are limited to transfer gear ratios, tread depth, and suspension strength. So, if you're looking to tweak your vehicle in NASCAR-style detail, it's likely you'll be very disappointed.

MTM2 does feature nine new truck designs—including some based on WCW and NWO wrestling characters (along with 11 trucks from the original). Unlike vehicles from the first game, these nitro-fueled mutations now show damage (especially in multiplayer arena competition), which eventually impedes performance.

There are a lot of things to like about this sequel, but leaving out several of the best features from the original puts you behind the wheel of a mediocre racer. In particular, a promised track editor that would have added considerable legs to this game failed to make the final release. In the end, MONSTER TRUCK MADNESS 2 won't quite get you to hog heaven, but it's the best rough-and-tumble racing game thus far. **CGW**

Plastic Explosives

ARMY MEN Has Great Appeal, Lousy Controls

by Terry Coleman

When I was growing up, every kid had little plastic soldiers that withstood the rigors of total war. Season after season, we fought epic battles in sand lots, leaf piles, and freshly tilled soil. We lined up our sun-scorched heroes and shot them with BB guns, bombarded them with dirt clods, and blew them sky high with fireworks. So when I saw that 3DO was working on ARMY MEN—a game aimed squarely at my nostalgia bone—I couldn't wait to play it.

I soon discovered that ARMY MEN lets you do things that we could only dream of as kids: torch enemy soldiers with flamethrowers, blow off their limbs with mortars, and call in air strikes. I thought the design team might

be taking the physics of burning plastic too seriously, but it put me in the mood for miniature combat, and after getting out my bucket helmet and BB gun, I was ready for action.

Move 'Em Out, Boys

ARMY MEN starts out with a good tutorial—which you'll badly need. As you take over Sarge (the

game's main character) and attempt to navigate the obstacle training course and turkey shoot setup, you'll likely consider returning the game to the store in frustration. ARMY MEN has one of the worst interfaces of any action game, a bizarre mouse/key combo that, in comparison, makes some flight-sim controls seem easy to use. The best way to get around

this is to use a joystick, but even then, be prepared to have your control buttons suddenly reset in the middle of a mission.

Once you get the controls down, the game is enjoyable, as you guide your loyal greenies against tan, blue, and gray enemies, all of whom have different styles of attack and defense.

There are power-ups in the form of flamethrowers, grenades, air support, and more scattered throughout the clever missions, which take place over a variety of terrain types. It's tough, for example, to dig enemies out of the alpine region and it's downright creepy to slog through the swamp. Even the bland desert terrain is appropriately reminiscent of a sandbox.

Often, however, the game is tougher than it

should be. Enemy soldiers are often placed where you must kneel or otherwise contort your soldier in order to shoot them. Even then you suffer through a random factor determining whether you hit your targets—while they rarely miss you. And call me a lame PC action gainer if you must, but why can't I save whenever I want?

If We Had a General, We'd Win This War

Neat as the little plastic toys are, you can't help but wonder why 3DO didn't use fully 3D models and support the major 3D accelerators. Plus, we've seen a lot of this before. Origin's CRUSADER had smoother controls (and better rolling moves) two years ago, and even mediocre fighting games make better use of the PC keypad. All of which makes you wonder what the 3DO folks were thinking when they devised such a lame interface. You can't change the mouse control, and it's amazing that there's no gamepad support, since 3DO was founded as a console company.

If, like me, you find yourself entranced by the subject matter, ARMY MEN will make a fun diversion. Otherwise, wait for a patch, and hope that 3DO buys a clue before the inevitable sequel. *CGW*



WHO NEEDS CAMOUFLAGE?
Your trusty green army men defend bridges over rivulets, make the desert even less hospitable, and firefight at close range in a train station.



COMPUTER GAMING WORLD



APPEAL: Brings back the joy of toy soldiers, with cool explosions.



PROS: Great concept; clever missions; flamethrowers and tanks are a hoot; good AI.

CONS: Terrible interface; lame save routine; no 3D support.

DIFFICULTY: Intermediate

REQUIREMENTS: Pentium 90, Windows 95, 16MB RAM, 115MB hard-drive space, 4x CD-ROM, Direct Draw SVGA graphics, Direct Sound-compatible sound card; supports DirectInput peripherals.

3D SUPPORT: None.

MULTIPLAYER SUPPORT: TCP/IP and IPX (1-4 players); direct modem, serial port (1-2).

Price \$39.95

Publisher 3DO
Redwood City
(650) 261-3000

www.armymen.com

X Almost Hits the Spot

X-Philes Will Appreciate This Decent Game More Than Most

by Thierry Nguyen

Well, we wanted to believe. But though THE X-FILES GAME looked at first to be a quality title with a good usage of its show license, it turns out, ultimately, to be just an average game with a high level of atmosphere for the X-phile. As a multimedia version of *The X-Files*, it does a decent job, picking up the pace near the end. As an actual adventure game, it screams "newbie"—yet there are enough problems to annoy even veterans of the adventure genre.

THE X-FILES GAME casts you as Special Agent Craig Willmore, a more or less by-the-book agent. As the game opens, you're simply

minding your own business, doing your usual antiterrorism case, when your SAIC (Special Agent in Charge—the local boss) calls you in, and introduces Assistant Director Skinner. Skinner tells you that two important agents of his, Fox Mulder and Dana Scully, have been missing for three days, and were last seen in Seattle. Your task is to find them.

Hard-core fans of the TV series may be able to guess what happened to our favorite duo based on the intro, and they will most likely be right when all is revealed in the end. The more casual fan will be given a plot filled with conspiracies, Russian mafia dealings, and government cover-ups that make up a good mythology episode (see the sidebar for how the game fits in the show's chronology).



REACH OUT AND TOUCH What's an X-Files episode without Scully asking "Where are you?" on the cell phone?

Images are crisp while maintaining a decent frame-rate.

The acting itself is generally solid, with the non-series actors doing a decent job overall. The actors from the TV show have quite minor roles, though. Mitch Pileggi (Skinner) is there only for the first few locations near the beginning of the game before flying away, and he seemed a bit too standoffish; perhaps being in a game was too new for him. Gillian Anderson has quite a bit of on-screen time; both she and David Duchovny are seen near the end of the game, and they do surprisingly well. They bring a lot of the *X-Files* feel and humor to the game. The Lone Gunman (Tom Braidwood, Bruce Harwood, and Dean Haglund) and X (Steven Williams) have short but functional scenes. Fans of The Cancer Man (William B. Davis) will be disappointed to hear that he appears in only one brief scene, if you die in a certain way.

Ennui A Deux

The actual game is essentially a MYST-y FMV adventure. The navigation is like MYST in that you use the pointer to click around a series of screens, but the gameplay is a bit more traditional. Many of the

puzzles are inventory- and dialogue-based, in that you pick up the right items lying around and you either use them correctly or talk to others about them in order to progress in the game.

Unfortunately, these puzzles are what drag the game down. There are, thankfully, no contrived clock-tower or water-machine-gear puzzles, but alas, there is a huge emphasis on hotspots. A lot hinges on collecting evidence and examining it. It's finding the evidence that constitutes the bulk of the game, and, at times, it boils down to searching large locales for a few



NEWTON WOULD BE PROUD Your PDA takes down excellent field notes for your reference, eliminating the need for manual note-taking.

COMPUTER GAMING WORLD



APPEAL:

Adventure newcomers and *The X-Files* groupies.



PROS: Very X-Files in atmosphere; puzzles are well integrated into plot, excellent FMV segments; Duchovny and Anderson seem to fit in; excellent auto-note taker.

CONS: Easy; annoying timed/action sequences; not enough save game slots; short, not as much screen time for *X-Files* stars as desired.

DIFFICULTY: Easy.

REQUIREMENTS: Windows 95, Pentium 120, 16MB RAM, 250MB hard-drive space, 4x CD-ROM, DirectX 5.0-compatible sound and video cards.

3D SUPPORT: None.

MULTIPLAYER SUPPORT: None

Price: \$49.95

Publisher: Fox Interactive
Beverly Hills, CA
(310) 369-7000

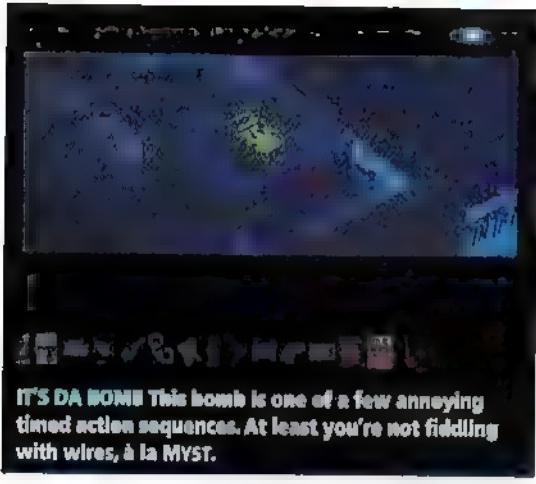
www.foxinteractive.com



DOES IT HAVE RED-EYE REDUCTION? The camera needs to be used only once, and even at that time, it's not a requirement.

The Bluescreen Where I Acted

Before delving into the negative aspects of the game, I might as well comment on the acting, since it's obviously more important in this game than in most. The FMV in this game is first-rate. After installing QuickTime 3.0, you can play the cut-scenes in high-quality, 24-bit video in letterbox format. These scenes actually look a lot cleaner and more professional than those of other games that feature FMV. The sets look real, and the



IT'S DA BOMB This bomb is one of a few annoying timed action sequences. At least you're not fiddling with wires, à la *Myst*.

measly hotspots. What comes to mind is searching the warehouse on disc 2 for four pieces of evidence, or the large freighter, the *Tarakan*, for three items and one location in particular. I clicked and searched for a hotspot on every screen until I struck gold. This was a case in which I knew exactly what to do, but doing it was what aggravated me.

Also, there are a few inventory-based puzzles, but not enough. You hardly use the computer station on your desk, as only a few crucial puzzles are solved there. Most of it is just pure filler to round out the atmosphere. Your PDA is only good for two things: traveling and taking *really* good auto-notes (I found myself looking at these to get a hint as to what to do next). The email is minimal (it was a bit fun to forward random mail around and see what kind of reply I'd get), and the address book had no use whatsoever.

The other various gadgets, like flashlights, night vision goggles, and the camera, were used once each for fun. Unlike *SPYCRAFT*, which had great puzzles that made excellent use of the toys at hand, *THE X-FILES* has toys mostly for show.

The Saved and The Loaded

Another problem

involves action sequences that will annoy some adventurers. The difficulty can be tweaked, and you can set the sequence to reload after every botched attempt, but still, I was often annoyed as I tried to figure out what I was doing wrong or how I could shoot my weapon faster.

The game's sequencing is another bummer. While the game allows you to travel anywhere in the course of the investigation, sometimes you *have* to do things in the right order in order to proceed. I spent the longest amount of time in the game on disc 2, simply because I overlooked one small item.

The game provides you with only 3 save slots, which are simply not enough for an adventure game. I was hoping for 10 slots, and I was cramped with 3. As for branching, the most it amounts to is how you die, and whether or not you get Astadourian (the female lead) in the end.

PHOTO VIEWER

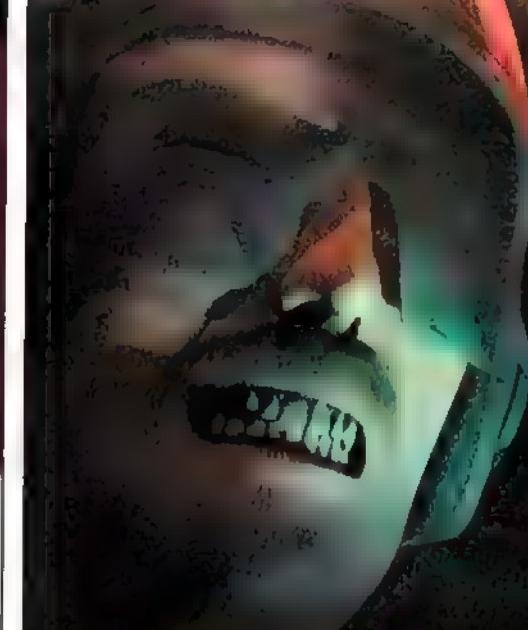
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Click on a thumbnail for an enlarged image

ING
MEDIA
PHOTO
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QUIT

FAMILY PICTURE ALBUM While this computer stuff is pretty cool, most of it is in the game for atmosphere only.

ADVENTURE/RPG



THE EARTH IS

MY MOTHER. ONLY

THE EMPIRE STANDS

BETWEEN HER AND THE CYBRI

DARKNESS. THOSE WHO

UNDERMINE THE EMPIRE BETRAY

HUMANITY. MY BROTHER

HAS BROKEN HIS

HOLY OATH AND LEADS

THE REBELLION. I WILL

STRIKE HIM DOWN IN HUMANITY'S

NAME. FOR I AM THE



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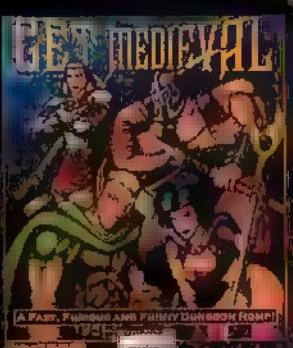
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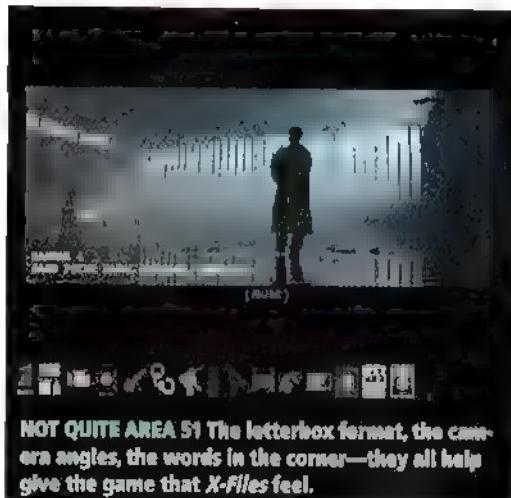
www.lith.com
www.getmedieval.com

THE X-FILES GAME is ultimately a novice level adventure game with a healthy dose of *X-Files* atmosphere. From the superimposed date, location, and time in the corner to the fact that you are playing a male-female duo—everything has an *X-Files* feel to it. A competent adventure gamer is looking at about 15 to 20 hours of gameplay, depending on how stuck you are looking for a hotspot, and

how long you decide to fiddle with the gadgets to enhance the atmosphere.

THE X-FILES was too short and too easy, with the exception of some of the action sequences, but the atmosphere

manages to pull the game up enough to earn an average rating. The ending hints at a sequel, and I hope for a more challenging and less annoying game the next time around. **CGW**



NOT QUITE AREA 51 The letterbox format, the camera angles, the words in the corner—they all help give the game that *X-Files* feel.

Fight the Timeline



Of course, some fans are wondering where the game fits in the *X-Files* mythology. Considering that *X* is still alive, and that the game involves the black oil but not the base, the game's setting is definitely within the third season, taking place after the two-parter *Piper Maru/Apocrypha* and before *Herrenvolk* (when *X* dies). There is no grand insight into the workings of the black oil, but there is a nice twist involving the oil in the story.

Also, the game has references both obvious and obscure for hardcore *X-Files* fans everywhere. I immediately recognized Jose Chung's novel, *From Outer Space*, but didn't notice how "Craig Willmore" was also the name of the boy mentioned in the "Hate him; wouldn't want to date him" scene from *Syzygy*.

ADVENTURE/RPG



HONOR IS A

SHAM WHEN IT STANDS

ON A PLATFORM OF

SLAVERY. HERE ON MARS, WE'LL

NEVER BOW OUR

HEADS FOR THE IMPERIAL

CHAIN - NEVER! IN THE END,

FREEDOM'S THE ONLY

TRUE LIGHT AGAINST DARKNESS.

THE EMPIRE'S GOING TO

HAVE TO LEARN THE

HARD WAY:



WITH

BLOOD AND STEEL.

IN 2829, HUMANITY HAS SPREAD THROUGH
THE SOLAR SYSTEM. WHEN CIVIL WAR
BREAKS OUT, IT BURNS
ACROSS WORLDS

STAR

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ARE DIVIDED, THE REAL
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MOONS, BROTHER IS LOCKED

WITH BROTHER IN

DESPERATE BATTLE.

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Lost in Space

Diagnosing a Mad Spaceship Isn't the Fun Ride It Should Be

by Charles Ardai

There's a great bit early on in Douglas Adams' new game, *STARSHIP TITANIC*. You've just been shanghaied onto a derelict spaceship that is manned by a crew of eccentric robots who have asked for your help in fixing the ship's central artificial intelligence. Unfortunately, they have declared most of the ship off-limits to you because they've decided that you are a third-class passenger. In order to get upgraded to second class (and thereafter to first class), you have to go to your third-class stateroom deep in the bowels of the ship and collect an in-flight magazine awarding you a free upgrade.

When you get to your room (no easy task), it's a minuscule, appar-

ently empty cube with a colorful Mondrian painting on the back wall. When you start clicking on a control panel, the various squares and rectangles of the Mondrian painting slide out into the room. The big red square is a comfy chair; the narrow white rectangle is a "floral enhancement" (a vase of flowers); and so on. Your room is so small that only certain combinations of its modular furnishings can be in use at any time. Your goal is to find and turn on the TV set (which will then announce your award), but it's way up at the top of the "painting." To get to it, you have to climb on the bed, but the bed can't support your weight unless you first open the dresser under it, and you can't open the dresser if you have the bed open, but you can't fully close the bed if the TV is out.... I've changed some of the details so as not to give away the solution, but you get the idea.

While the puzzle here is pretty simple, the conceit is clever; the visuals are fun, and the interface doesn't get in the way. It's neither a brilliant puzzle, as was getting the babel fish in Douglas Adams' 1984 game *THE HITCHHIKER'S GUIDE TO THE GALAXY*, nor a brilliant bit of mind-bending comedy, as was the biscuit gag in Adams' fourth *Hitchhiker's* novel—but it is a cute sci-fi riff on the classic stateroom scene in the Marx Brothers' *A Night at the Opera*, and it did bring a smile to my face.



NO TIP FOR YOU The Bellbot is so lame that you'll be tempted to take his offer of listening to Bobby Headcase and the Laid-back Loafers, just to get away.



WHAT'LL YOU HAVE, SIR?
Well, how about a bar with some nonplayer characters to talk to?

entire surreal world with a few sentences the way Douglas Adams can, or can write laugh-out-loud satire like Douglas Adams, or use language in such marvelously out-of-kilter ways that you find yourself quoting them back to friends years later. ("The ships hung in the sky in much the same way that bricks don't" is a personal favorite.)

But words are passé in current society, nowhere more so than in computer games. Text-only games have been out of fashion for roughly as long as mummification, but in the current post-MYST environment it's not even enough for adventure games to contain graphics; they have to contain abundant, opulent, gorgeous, soaring graphics, almost to the exclusion of anything else. So what did Douglas Adams do to give *STARSHIP TITANIC* the best chance it could have for success? He hired a pair of Academy Award-winning set designers and had them fill the game with opulent, gorgeous, soaring graphics: rotundas and canals, entryways and exits, museum-sized exhibition rooms, and (once you get upgraded) huge

COMPUTER GAMING WORLD



APPEAL:
Hitchhiker's Guide fans willing to put up with a frustrating interface to play in a Douglas Adams universe.



PROS:
Impressive visuals by Oscar-winning set designers; occasionally funny bits.

CONS: Poorly designed, confusing interface; weak conversations with robots; too often, it's not really funny.

DIFFICULTY: Easy.

REQUIREMENTS: Pentium 100, Windows 95, 16MB RAM, 16MB hard-drive space, 4x CD-ROM, Windows-compatible SVGA graphics, 16-bit sound card.

3D SUPPORT: None.

MULTIPLAYER SUPPORT: None

Price: \$49.95
Publisher: Simon and Schuster
New York, NY
(888) 793-9922
www.starshiptitanic.com

Go Ahead and Panic

Once upon a time, Douglas Adams made his living (and his reputation) with words: first his radio script for *Hitchhiker's*, then the novels themselves, and finally his two text-only computer games for Infocom in the '80s. This was a good thing, because Adams, like Lewis Carroll before him, has a gift for making words do what he wants. Few people can create an

staterooms that look like something out of a 1930s movie. Heaps of art-deco decorations, even on the robots. It's a joy to look at. When being poled down the canal in a robot gondola, you'll go ooooh.

But "gorgeous" and "funny" are two very different things, and so are "gorgeous" and "playable." Too much of STARSHIP TITANIC is gorgeous, but it's neither funny nor playable. To begin with, it's hard just to find your way around. You move in discrete steps (in the fashion of ZORK NEMESIS rather than, say, DOOM), but the environment gives you too few visual clues to feel comfortable that you know what you're looking at from step to step. A disorienting blurring effect used between every two steps doesn't help either.

No Room Service

Too much of the time a move leaves you staring into a wall from what feels like three inches away. You can't really get started in the game until you go to your room, which should be a simple matter of riding an elevator to the correct floor, but because of the three-inches-away graphic style, I spent hours wandering around the ship's

central well hunting for the right elevator. The problem? The fact that there are two elevators on each side of the well rather than just one becomes apparent only if you walk past the elevators and then turn back twice. Otherwise you can see only one of the elevators at a time (and since they look identical, you conclude that only one exists). This isn't clever puzzle design; it's just a pain in the ass.

Later, when you get to your floor, you have to pick out the right room from a stacked set of cabins, but the way they're stacked will leave you bumping into walls and turning around and around in place. For a long time, I couldn't figure out how to get out of the elevator, simply because the door is drawn in a way that doesn't look like a door. Elsewhere in the game you use a "pellerator" for horizontal travel through the ship, but it's hard to figure out how to leave the pellerator, because the side with the exit looks exactly like the side that holds the control panel. "This is very confusing, I know," says a robot voice. It sure is.

Once you figure out how to find your way around, you have to wrestle with the main interface,

which has separate sections for your inventory,



BURIED IN THE HOLD The premise—that you must get upgraded from third- to first-class passage—has a lot of comic potential, but the gameplay rarely delivers.

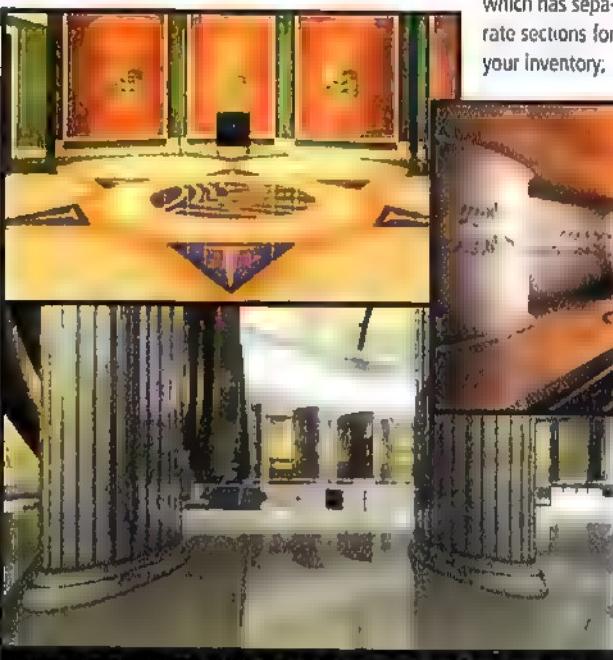
the controls of external objects, such as the pellerator; and talking to the robots. The conversation system, hyped on the game's packaging as a "cutting-edge natural-language text parser, enabling complex and entertaining conversations," is the biggest disappointment. While it is true that you can type in plain English sentences and get some response from the robots, the robots seem to understand very little of what you say to them, judging by how often they dodge your questions, interject non sequiturs, and generally carry on like first cousins to the venerable

Random Bits of Comedy

Then there are the puzzles, which are a tolerable lot: The dismembered waiterbot in the restaurant wants different music playing and elsewhere you find a robot orchestra and a recording device; the bartender needs to make a cocktail containing a "pureed flock of starlings," and elsewhere you see birds flying around a fan; and so on. Some are easy, some hard, but none is especially funny. Meanwhile, random bits of comedy go on around you, as the ship's computer makes silly announcements, and a deranged parrot squawks "I don't like the roof of my mouth!" Douglas Adams himself crops up here and there, as the voice of this and the face of that.

But for all the effort, the game's just not very funny. Where STARSHIP TITANIC excels is in beautiful visuals, and those are a dime a dozen in adventure games these days. The puzzles are a little better than average, but just a little. It's unlikely that anyone will enjoy STARSHIP TITANIC half as much as Legend's uglier, but much funnier, CALLAHAN'S CROSS-TIME SALOON.

It's a shame, because Douglas Adams is such an enormous talent (not to mention a passionate and knowledgeable gamer), but it seems highly likely that this TITANIC's success will resemble that of its nautical, rather than that of its cinematic, namesake. **CCW**



MYST OPPORTUNITY All the stately columns, antique musical instruments, and gorgeous lobby decor in the galaxy can't hide the barren emptiness of STARSHIP TITANIC.

natural-language hoax "Eliza." You end up trying to think of something to say that the robots might possibly understand, but you usually fail. And, anyway, how much is there that you might conceivably want to discuss with the robots? After, "What's going on?" and "Can you help me with X?" it's not like you're going to start chatting about Sartre.

Crazy, Man

SANITARIUM Isn't Exactly a "Good Time," But It's an Awesome Adventure

by Jeff Green

Now this is a case of good timing. At exactly the moment when I was beginning to completely despair for adventure games, along comes a title that renews my faith in the genre. *SANITARIUM*, designed by DreamForge Entertainment (makers of *ANVIL OF DAWN* and *CHRONOMASTER*) is a compelling, original, and affecting story, one that reminds you that adventure games—at their best—can pull at your heart and brain as solidly as any motion picture. And, for me, this one does it better than any adventure game since *GARRIEL KNIGHT II*.

The opening cut-scene sets the story. A man, sitting at his computer, makes a phone call, excitedly



INSANE IN THE BRAIN *SANITARIUM* starts out with you regaining consciousness in an insane asylum, covered in bandages, unable to remember who you are. Then it gets weird.

reporting that he has made a breakthrough on a problem he has been researching. He heads off in his car—but it's been sabotaged, and he careens off a cliff. When he awakes, he finds himself covered in bandages and apparently the resident of a horribly nightmarish insane asylum—with no memory of who he is or how he got there.

This is the situation in which the game puts you, as you assume his identity and try to cope with the circumstances. Who are you? Where are you? How much of this is really happening and how much is merely in your mind? Now, it might not sound like the most original idea for a game, but where the story goes, and how it gets there, is unexpected and cool—all of which compels you to keep playing.

Walk This Way

SANITARIUM, a three-CD game that plays faster than most single-CD games, is divided into nine chapters, with each chapter taking place in a different setting. Some locales are in "reality"; some are not—and it's not always clear which is which.

The game is linear in the extreme: You cannot advance to the next chapter without completing the current one, and in each chapter most puzzles need to be completed in a particular order. So if you're stuck, you're stuck. That's the bad news. The good news is that the game is relatively easy (actually, very easy for experienced adventure gamers), so nothing should hold you up for very long, assuming your synapses are firing. The puzzles themselves take the

form of every adventure gaming puzzle you've ever tackled: object manipulation, code deciphering, logic, tone puzzles—even a few lightweight action sequences. Like the plot, the puzzles aren't particularly original or ground-breaking, but they are extremely well integrated into the structure and mood of the game. Even when I had to fix a broken piece of machinery (something I loathe), it was within a logical context in the gameworld. Nothing ever feels like dumb, gratuitous puzzle-solving. Well, I take that back. The action sequences did feel dumb and gratuitous, and I'm not exactly sure what the designers were trying to accomplish. Mercifully, they're brief and not too tough.

Toys in the Attic

To match its subject matter, *SANITARIUM* features an appropriately grim and disturbing graphic look. The isometric views are detailed and atmospheric, effectively conveying the main character's often outrageous, altered states. And while the backgrounds remain static, the numerous small touches—an empty can rolling down a street, for example—help to bring the scenes to life.



MONTEZUMA'S REVENGE This surreal Aztec setting later in the game isn't as effective as some of the gritty, earlier sequences.

COMPUTER GAMING WORLD



APPEAL:

Adventure gamers hungering for a serious, deep story.



PROS:

Outstanding plot and design; good integration of puzzles into gameworld; striking graphics and music that realize the game's disturbed vision.

CONS: Some navigational annoyances; bad game-stopping bug (now patched); weak voice-acting; a few action sequences may frustrate some gamers.

DIFFICULTY:

Easy. Requirements: Pentium 90, Windows 95, 16MB RAM, 30MB hard-drive space, 4x CD-ROM drive, 1MB PC video card, mouse.

3D SUPPORT:

None. Multiplayer Support: None.

Patricier ASC Games
Stamford CT
(203) 327-3766
www.ascgames.com



THAT'S GOTTA HURT Impaled bodies are among the gruesome visuals found throughout the game. This one is definitely not for kids.

As you solve puzzles, the game rewards you with a steady stream of cut-scenes—most are either flashbacks or pieces of remembrance—that flesh out the unpredictable story without ever giving too much away. The cut-scenes, which play out in 3D graphics in letterbox form, are noirish, moody, and eminently satisfying.

"Disturbing" actually just begins to describe SANITARIUM. Though the game has a "Teen" (13 and up) rating on the box, be forewarned that the subject matter and imagery are not for the squeamish. Like Harlan Ellison's *I HAVE NO MOUTH, AND I MUST SCREAM*, this is most definitely for

adults. Images such as impaled bodies, deformed children, and the like abound—and some of the puzzles themselves (like digging up the body of a dead child) put you into the main character's private psychological hell.

For those who can take it, though, the payoff is immense. The chapter set in "the Mansion," in which a young girl explores a house full of ghosts, is actually sad; and by the end it achieves a moment of emotional resonance that I've never before encountered in a computer game.

Rocks

SANITARIUM is not, however, without its problems.

The biggest bummer is a horrendous bug that stops many people's game (including mine) dead in Chapter 2. You must download the patch from ASC Games' Web site before you start playing (the company reports that the patch is being included in newer boxed copies), or you'll have to start your game over.

Navigation can be a bit annoying. You manipulate the

main character by holding down the right mouse button, but it's sometimes difficult to get where you want to go, or to know where you're even supposed to go or how to get there. Worse, if you accidentally click on a staircase, you trigger a "walk up/down staircase" script that you can't interrupt. There are also some pixel-hunting puzzles that could have benefited from larger, or easier to see, hotspots. The one time I got really stuck in the game wasn't because I

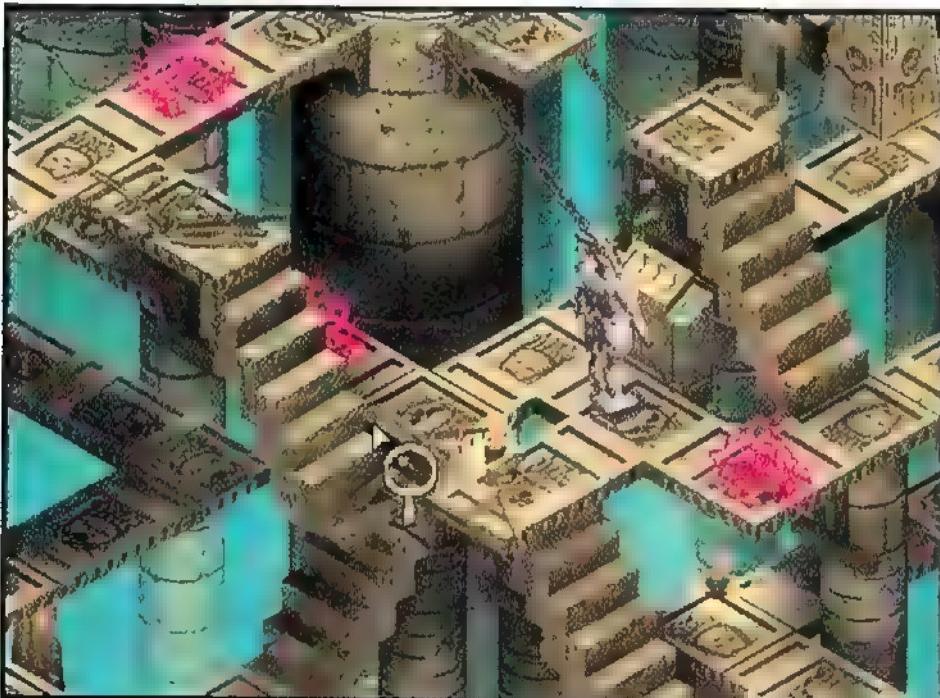
didn't know the puzzle answer—it was because I never discovered the dang pixel that would let me do what I knew was the right answer.

Some bad voice-acting also mars the game—unfortunately, most is from the main character, whose overacting and bad timing almost wrecks it. I say *almost* because the story is strong enough to carry you through.

Finally, while the game maintains a creepy tone and is excellently paced, I couldn't help



LIGHTHEARTED, IT'S NOT What would a fun adventure game be without the chance to talk to deformed children?



BAD REFLEX To finish SANITARIUM, you'll have to get through a few action sequences, such as the maze shown here. They're not hard, but the reflex-impaired should be forewarned.

feeling that it petered out a little toward the end, especially in the Aztec section, which was far closer to *MYST*-clone blather than anything I would've expected in a game this good.

Dream On

In the final analysis, it's just too hard to seriously come down on a game that does so much right, and which—in terms of both subject matter and presentation—soars head and-shoulders above everything else in the adventure genre. If you can deal with the often horrific subject matter and imagery and can get past the minor annoyances, then SANITARIUM is well worth the money, especially for anyone who has been longing for a serious, adult game. Flaws aside, SANITARIUM is the best adventure game released so far this year. **CGW**

Copter Command

Leadership Is the Key to Success in This Helicopter Sim

by Robin G. Kim

Campaigns in most combat flight sims are purely episodic affairs. You get briefed, fly a sortie, get debriefed, then repeat the cycle. There is nothing wrong with this formula—many classic titles have employed it to excellent effect—but original it is not.

Enter TEAM APACHE, a sim that subtly transcends this shopworn convention by bridging the gaps between missions with seamlessly integrated gameplay rather than with mood-breaking intermissions. As the commander of a U.S. Army AH-64A Apache attack helicopter



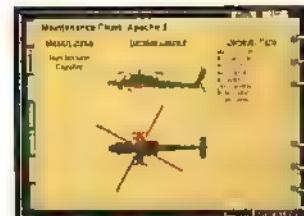
WATCH OUT FOR THAT TREE Although various kinds of trees dot the terrain, they serve more as navigational hazards than as cover.

company, your job isn't over when the aircraft lands: It's just beginning.

Unless you choose to deactivate the game's crew-management option, you have a huge responsibility even before you start either of TEAM APACHE's two campaigns—you have to pick your flight crew: 8 pilots and 8 copilot/gunners (CP/Gs) from a pool of 32 candidates. As you flip through the dossiers, each of your potential crew members introduces himself

in a unique voice. Their temperaments range from enthusiastic to coolly professional to downright grouchy ("My call sign's 'Pluto.' That's after the god of the Underworld...not the damn dog."). While the deliverables are definitely "Hollywood," the exaggerated accents and mannerisms give each crew member a distinct character.

Once the campaign is underway, you carry out command duties on the ground in realtime. These include ongoing personnel management, allocating repair tasks to maintenance crew chiefs (this can be automated), tracking spare parts, and planning missions. Being the boss in this sim is no picnic. The burden of command weighs heavily indeed when your entire air crew is exhausted and half are physically ill from combat stress, your maintenance team is spent from working through the night trying to make your damaged birds



HURTIN' PUPPY To your maintenance crew chiefs, the detailed damage model just means more systems for them to have to repair.

flyable again, and you haven't recovered from the previous flight before a new mission is handed down from above.

Hot Spots

TEAM APACHE's two campaigns consist of sequences of scripted missions. The first pits your company team against drug cartels and Marxist guerrillas in Colombia. The second (which can be played only after completing the first) deploys you in support of a NATO effort to repulse a Russian assault through Latvia. Although the campaigns are essentially linear, damage and casualties do carry forward across flights, and search-and-rescue missions are called after any Apaches are shot down.

The second campaign is longer and considerably more difficult than the first. Not only are the Russians better equipped than the Colombians (the Russians have got mobile SAM and AAA vehicles while the guerrillas are toting rifles), but your men also don't seem to get any rest between campaigns—they arrive in Latvia dead tired, and go downhill from there.



PAN AND SCAN The free-panning virtual-cockpit view in TEAM APACHE features a fully functional instrument panel.

Construction Zone

TEAM APACHE comes with a mission builder utility capable of producing stand-alone scenarios that are as elaborate as the ones

included in the game. Each group of friendly and enemy units placed on the map can be issued several types of orders. Basic orders are a sequence of commands that

are followed by a default. Each command can call for a unit to remain in place, advance, implement a mobile defense, trigger another unit to do something, conduct an artillery

►Continued on pg 242

COMPUTER GAMING WORLD



APPEAL: Flight-sim gamers who are willing to sacrifice hard-core realism for a novel and atmospheric sim that mixes leadership responsibilities with missions that are action-oriented.



PROS: Interesting campaign storylines; well-crafted missions; involving interactions with crew members; excellent sound effects and 3D-accelerated graphics; good use of digitized speech throughout; powerful mission builder

CONS: Somewhat jerky flight-model feel; no mission recorder; lackluster frame rate without a 3D card; campaigns rather short.

DIFFICULTY: Intermediate

REQUIREMENTS: Pentium 133, 16MB RAM, 250MB hard-drive space, 4x CD-ROM drive, 2MB graphics card, sound card.

3D SUPPORT: 3Dfx, ATI Rage Pro, Rendition Verite 2100/2200, Direct3D

MULTIPLAYER SUPPORT: Modem, serial cable, LAN, Mplayer (2-8 players), 1 CD per player.

Price: \$49.95

Publisher: Mindscape
Novato, CA
(415) 895-2000

www.mindscape.com



WHAT
IF?



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ON THE WRONG SIDE
OF THE LAW?

NIGHT LIFE

The only practical cockpit view option at night is the full-screen PNVS (Pilot's Night Vision Sensor) display, forcing you to switch views when you want to check your instruments. The PNVS image dims realistically after bright flashes from rockets or explosions.



ROCKET MAN Your available weapon types include two types of unguided rockets, laser-guided Hellfire missiles, Stinger air-to-air missiles, and the Integral 30mm chain gun.



FLIGHT PLAN The mission planner gives you considerable flexibility in customizing your routes and default rules of engagement. The only major shortcoming is that you're not able to split your team among multiple flight paths.

You receive scenario backgrounds, text briefings, detailed situation reports, and occasional newspaper clippings; and all are exceptionally well done. Less linear than the missions themselves, this intelligence varies according to how your team is doing while imparting a sense that you are only one part of a larger war machine.

Get Into the Zone

barrage, and so on. Four types of contingency orders can also be given. These specify what command sequences should be executed when the unit encounters enemies, takes fire, suffers casualties, or receives a trigger event from another unit.

With these tools, you can stage a variety of land battles, with opposing ground forces merrily blasting away at each

Apart from the campaigns, the game features an instant-action mode, interactive training missions, and 16 single missions, as well as a flexible mission builder to let you create more. Multiplayer options include deathmatch, capture the flag, convoy attack/defense, and cooperative single missions (but not campaigns).

There Is No "I" in Team

The commander himself doesn't fly any combat sorties, so during a mission you will assume the persona of whichever pilot was assigned to the lead gunship. Barring shortages of air crew or flyable helicopters, you can choose to allocate two, four, or six aircraft for any particular flight. You get to select weapon loadouts only as you ready for campaign missions, and all of your Apaches must be configured identically.

The list of wingman commands is extensive, allowing you to direct your wingmen collectively or in groups. Maintaining enough situational awareness to exploit this tactical freedom can be difficult, however. Though part of the problem is true to life (the "A" model Apache simulated here lacks radar), much of the blame rests on communication limitations in the sim. Wingmen cheerfully state their relative positions when you ask

Continued from pg 240

other using guns and antitank guided missiles. Their shots are not very accurate, but the fireworks make an exciting backdrop for a gamer's flight. For added spice, enemy attack helicopters or artillery support for the gamer can also be thrown in.

The interface is easy to use, enabling you to whip up a custom mission in just a few minutes; and the group copy and paste feature facilitates the creation of larger scenarios. For those who enjoy tinkering, this utility can significantly extend the life of the game.

them, and they will report in when they spot targets—now if only you could get them to tell you where those targets are!

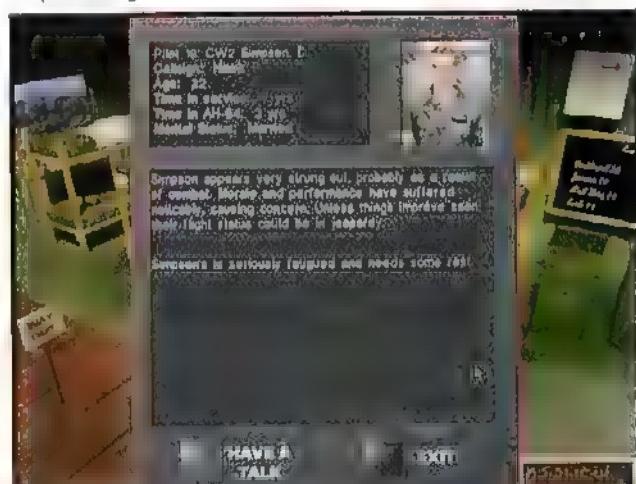
TEAM APACHE's flight model is simplified, with a kind of "super ground effect" helping you avoid high-speed ground contact, but overall aircraft performance seems believable. The feeling of flight would be good if not for a strange jerkiness that makes it difficult to execute smooth, gentle turns. Avionics modeling is fairly accurate functionally, though it does lack the painstaking attention to detail

found in LONGBOW 2. Spotting ranges are relatively short, particularly with enemy infantry, making frantic firefights a common occurrence. Even against vehicles, slow, stealthy bob-up tactics rarely come into play. Combat in TEAM APACHE is clearly action-oriented.

AI Is My Copilot

The CP/G position in the AH-64A Apache's front seat is reserved for the AI—you can fly only from the pilot's seat in back. Consequently, you rarely get to see the targets that you attack as anything more than a designation symbol on the screen unless you're right on top of them. Your CP/G will call out the type of target he has in his sights, but because all voice messages are queued sequentially, other radio chatter can cause his message to come late or not at all. Activating the target ID display option alleviates this problem. Unfortunately, no similar work-around exists for delayed or canceled missile launch warnings—which has predictably dire consequences.

The sim boasts gorgeous graphics with a 3D accelerator card; 2D graphics are pixelated and slow by comparison. Especially impressive is the broad array of weather types, including varying cloud cover, rain, fog, snow, and thunderstorms with lightning. The game's



CHECKING IN It's important to visit with all the pilots and CP/Gs occasionally. They will tell you (using digitized speech) how they're doing, which, combined with detailed textual status reports, allows you to monitor their fatigue and morale levels. Pep talks can be given as necessary.



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IF

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The Human Factor

The differences among your crew members in TEAM APACHE go much deeper than just their voices and personalities. Each person is rated in the following categories: tracking ability, reaction speed, navigational ability, day-flying skill, night-flying skill, rocket accuracy, situational awareness, composure, stamina, and compatibility with others. These ratings directly determine how a crew member will perform in the air. For example, a broadly skilled CP/G in the front seat of your AH-64 will find targets faster and track them more accurately than a mediocre (or very tired) one. Since these are prerequisites to putting your weapons on target, the quality of the guy in front obviously bears directly on your combat effectiveness. The way the sim represents this is particularly well done. You can actually see your CP/G scanning his sensors in a search for targets, then slewing the targeting cursor over to one he finds, and trying to keep it there with a speed and precision consistent with his skill level.

Dealing with the imperfections of your air crew may get frustrating at times, but it is also realistic. Real human beings are fallible, unlike the totally efficient automatons you get to work with in some sims.

audio effects are also excellent, especially the roar of the engines and rotors on your Apache gunship.

With its emphasis on audiovisual splendor and its toned-down realism in both flight and systems modeling, TEAM APACHE should prove to be an attractive combat flight package for casual sim gamers. But when you add to that the two engrossing—though unfortunately somewhat short—campaign plotlines and the atmosphere-enhancing air crew interactions in and out of the cockpit, even serious sim fans may want to give this title a closer look. **CGW**

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747-400 Precision Simulator



Publisher: Aerowinx

Price: \$219

www.christlist.com/hiflight-store/

As a kid, did you dream of being a pilot? Big money, world travel, dates with flight attendants, managing one of the most complex vehicles in existence? Well, 747-400 PRECISION SIMULATOR from Aerowinx won't help you with the first three, but it'll bring you as close as you can get to the last without renting time in an airline's full-cockpit sim.

Don't buy this sim if you're looking for the chance to sightsee. The program is designed to be a fully realistic simulation of the cockpit of a 747, and while the systems are simulated in great detail, there's little in the way of graphical flash. The program uses the same visual trick used in older full-cockpit simulations: It sets your flights either at night or in inclement weather, during which simple city and runway lights actually create a fairly realistic experience.

The level of detail in the instrument systems is nothing short of astounding. With the autopilot and flight-director functionality, you can

engine controls to the passenger seat-belt light switch. A full database of the world's airports is included, and weather and wind shear are simulated with frightening authenticity.

What's missing? Besides the outside view, very little. The biggest improvement would be air traffic control (ATC) while en-route. In the current version, ATC guides you only during takeoff and approach. Also, the documentation explains all the instrument systems, but includes almost no information on actual flying procedures.

747-400 PRECISION SIMULATOR is a pro-quality sim, and it comes at a pro-quality price. But real pilots who want to know what it's like to fly the big iron, or sim pilots who are looking for a truly realistic experience (and who don't mind a little outside reading to get up to speed), will find lots of value for the money. —Denny Atkin

Red Sea Operations



Publisher: Infogrames/DID

Price: \$20

www.did.com

RED SEA OPERATIONS is an add-on disc for DID's F22 AIR DOMINANCE FIGHTER (ADF). The package adds three new campaigns as well as an AWACS tour of duty to the sim. Created by Sim-Tech, which developed ADF's built-in missions, RED SEA OPS is targeted at the serious sim fan. All missions start on the runway, rather than en-route to the target. Missions are well crafted, with interesting tasks such as escorting U-2s or hunting SCUD missiles.

The real meat here, though, is for fans of ADF's AWACS mode. Not only is there an entire AWACS campaign, but the other three tours

sit back and let the plane fly itself. But when you do want to take control, nearly every switch you'd find in a real 747-400 is here—from the navigational displays and

of duty also include AWACS missions.

Each of the campaigns is set in the early 21st century, in the same geographic region as ADF. Alas, you won't find any new terrain or aircraft here. More annoying is the fact that the disc includes versions of the missions for both pre- and post-patch versions of ADF. Why not just include the patch on the CD, since it has 500MB of free space?

Is RED SEA OPS really worth it when F22 TOTAL AIR WAR, which will include a dynamic campaign, is just around the corner? While it



of the new campaigns is designed by a helicopter pilot and former U.S. Army liaison to Boeing/Sikorsky.

Along with the 40-odd new missions, COMANCHE GOLD now includes a full-featured editor, which lets you create your own. Other improvements include sup-

port for 800x600 resolution (you'll need a fast Pentium II for this), weather effects (such as rain and snow), and new vehicles (such as the AC-130 gunship). There's better wingman control, and his AI has been improved. He's still not

that swift, but at least he now looks to see if you're in the way before firing off a missile.

You'll now be able to find partners for COMANCHE's superb cooperative missions on Novalogic's free Novaworld server. Unfortunately, I didn't experience the silky-smooth play afforded by F-22 RAPTOR when playing COMANCHE GOLD. Novalogic, however, seems to be committed to continuously improving its online support.

With new missions, a full-featured editor, and numerous sim improvements, there's more here than you'll find in the typical "gold" package. It's worth checking out for COMANCHE owners as well as for other action-sim fans. —Denny Atkin



doesn't add as much to the game as most expansion discs, there's plenty of play value here for \$20, especially if you enjoy the strategic AWACS mode. —Denny Atkin

Comanche Gold



Publisher: Novalogic

Price: \$44.95

www.novalogic.com

COMANCHE GOLD supercharges last year's COMANCHE 3, more than doubling the number of missions available to you in this action-oriented helicopter sim. New environments are added, including Cambodia and Indonesia. In keeping with Novalogic's new trend of consulting real military experts, one



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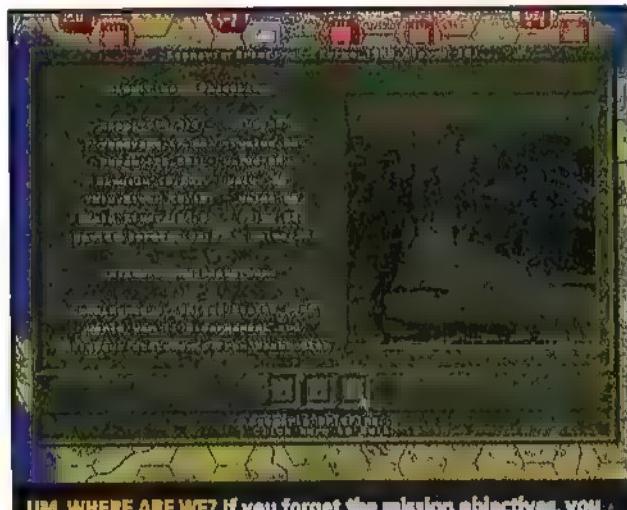


Art for War's Sake

A Reward for Armchair Generals Who Can Think on Their Feet

by Jim Cobb

The Germans call it *Fingerspitzengefühl*: the instinctive ability to commit the right mix of forces at just the right time and place to completely confound the enemy and leave your side master of the battlefield. This feel for combat distinguishes operational decisions from the coolness of strategy and the immediate, hot-blooded responses to tactical situations. This ability cannot be taught—if it could, every war academy class would produce a Robert E. Lee or Erwin Rommel—nor has it yet been fully simulated by any strategy game. Regardless of the amount of unknowns tossed into each combat algorithm, players have been able to calculate with a good degree of certainty



UM, WHERE ARE WE? If you forget the mission objectives, you can access the briefing at any time. And if you're allergic to hexagons, you can turn them off.

when and where a particular move would work

All this is about to change, however. Veteran designer Norm Koger (AGE OF RIFLES, TANKS!), given a free hand by TalonSoft, has developed a system that forces gamers to develop their instincts as well as their arithmetic. THE OPERATIONAL ART OF WAR (ART) covers campaigns from 1939–1955 (roughly WWII through Korea). It has the level of detail and realism that we've come to expect from both Koger and TalonSoft. What sets this game apart from all other turn-based strategy/wargames is its innovative combination of time, movement, and action.

Turn, Turn, Turn

Turns are divided into 10 tactical rounds, but the passage of these rounds is not marked, so that you cannot predict exactly when the turn will end. A battle will use a percentage of these rounds based upon the number of units involved, the distance attacking forces move to engage, and the intensity of combat. One informational screen gives an

estimate of the percent of the turn used, but this may be based on faulty intelligence. Thus, a battle that you might expect to use 10 percent of a turn might actually use 30 percent when the defender throws in unexpected reserves—this tends to keep you on your toes much more than does the typical turn-based game.

The crucial effect of long battles is that the movement points of the attacker's other units are reduced by the percentage used.



PAPER WARS If you really need to look at cardboard counters, these look as good as you'll find this side of a board wargame.

Thus, a battle that was to open a hole for armor may use up that armor's capacity to exploit the enemy's weaknesses. Conversely, moving units before resolving attacks eliminates opportunities to plunge through gaps. Players must judge which point is critical, how much force is economical to do the job, when to attack, and what movement can be saved. ART demands that you understand the capabilities of the forces engaged and the flow of battle; gamers who obsess over how to achieve that 6:1 odds ratio may find themselves quickly lost.

Not that understanding a force's capability is easy; it's more of an art than a science. Sure, the various units sport the usual movement, attack, and defense factors. But what isn't evident is that these factors merely scratch the surface: They are derived from more than a dozen different other factors that include supply, morale, equipment, and formation. An undersupplied armor division, for example, may roll through a garrison but be held up by a battalion of well-trained and well-positioned antitank guns. To be successful, you must compare the 93 different unit types



APPEAL:

Anyone remotely interested in an in-depth operational wargame



PROS:

Innovative approach to time and movement; comprehensive weapon system and organizational features; smooth interface for such a complex game.

CONS: Steep learning curve, no LAN or Internet play.

DIFFICULTY:

Advanced. Pentium 90, Windows 95, 16MB RAM, SMB hard-drive space, 2x CD-ROM, SVGA graphics.

3D SUPPORT:

None. Email, hotseat (1–2 players); 1 CD per player.

Price: \$39.95
Publisher: TalonSoft
Falls Church, VA
(800) 213-6504

www.talonsoft.com

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WWIII What-if Scenario



In addition to historical battles, you can also examine plausible hypothetical conflicts, such as this face-off of Patton's troops in Czechoslovakia, 1945.

with the terrain and troops to be attacked, while also considering the supply, transport, support, and air superiority conditions. To attack without considering these factors is to throw away the economy of time and force necessary for victory. And if all this isn't complex enough for you, let me add that ART employs a multitude of scales. Units can represent anything from squads to corps, and they have the capacity to break down and recombine into different formations. Likewise, movement scales vary from battle to battle.

It's All Right

The nice thing is that ART's interface and graphic approach

help you sort through the complicated decision-making process. The Map Panel takes up three-quarters of the screen and shows the details of the scenario map, located in a smaller window. You can get info on terrain features at a glance simply by moving the cursor over the area in question.

Left-clicking on a unit brings it up in the Unit Panel, showing both its 2D NATO symbol and 3D icon (as well as the three base combat values referred to earlier). Right-clicking on a unit brings up all the action options—changes in formation, embarking on planes, and so forth—and also gives you vital information on the unit and its parent formation,

including its present condition and any special abilities.

While the sheer amount of information can be intimidating, the mechanics themselves are pretty simple. Movement is a matter of right-clicking on the objective. To enter combat, you right-click on an enemy, and the pop-up menu then allows you to set single- or group attacks, as well as the intensity of conflict. The convenient "Plan an attack" option shows the six hexes adjacent to the defender and all available support units. Left-clicking on a unit commits it to an attack; but if an

unit's organization prohibits it from full cooperation, the attack will be penalized (shown by a black pennant). Depending on what is known of the defender, this screen will estimate results and time expended. Battles are resolved at any time during a turn with an after-action report that shows the flow of combat, the number of casualties, and the battle's end result. The effects of battles on each force are calculated automatically each turn, and, in keeping with the surprise nature of each battle, some results will trigger events such as poison gas and nukes. To put it mildly, this game is never boring.

Roll With It

ART is certainly comprehensive. It comes with 18 scenarios that employ every type of combat unit—from famous WWII armored formations to guerrillas to ski troops. And while the graphics are hardly as sexy as those in the latest 3D shooters, they do a good enough job of highlighting the troops and terrain—especially given how easy it is to create your own scenarios with the map editor (see this month's CG Tips

article for advice on creating your own maps).

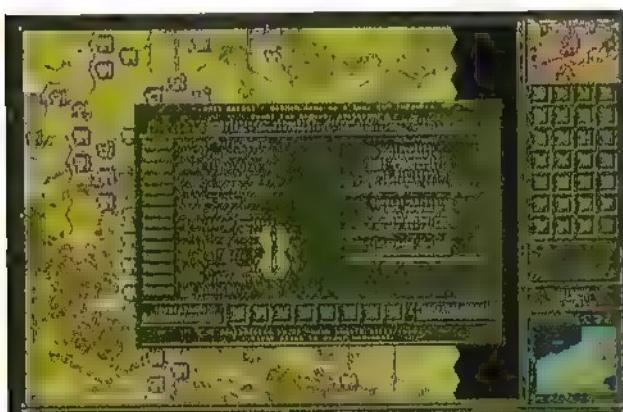
The computer opponent is one of the best I've seen in any strategy game. Because of the constantly changing nature of each turn, the AI must formulate a long-range plan, as opposed to the usual number-crunching employed by most computer opponents. After a while,



CLOSE QUARTERS This inset view gives you a good look at the 3D unit icons, comparable to those of PANZER GENERAL II.

however, you will probably want to battle against a human general, and this is one of the few areas in which ART fails. TalonSoft did a nice job with play-by-email for this game, as your PBEM files are compressed nicely when sent; the game plays okay via hotseat as well. But this is one of the rare turn-based games that cries out for Internet and LAN play because of the constantly changing flow of play. Even though Internet play is advertised on the box, it isn't in the game—shame, shame.

Other than this flaw, however, it's hard to find fault with ART. The game's depth and range is breathtaking: Every element of operational combat is fully represented, and the elements that make up fighting units' characteristics are wonderfully simulated. The abstract concepts of air superiority and naval support are handled so cleanly that they are almost invisible. THE OPERATIONAL ART OF WAR is one of those rare games that combines many common elements with sparks of insight and innovation, transcending all predecessors and creating a new standard for operational wargames. **CGW**



ORDERS OF INTIMIDATION The control panel (here showing unit info) has a frightening 24 buttons. But only the first eight actually affect play; the others modify displays and present reports.

COMMANDOS

BEHIND ENEMY LINES

Eidos Interactive explodes on the real-time tactical combat scene with the refreshingly spunky Commandos.

Pyro Studios of Madrid, Spain has created an intriguing departure from the glut of real time clones. With the publishing muscle of Eidos Interactive behind them, Pyro has unleashed the "Dirty Dozen". "Commandos: Behind Enemy Lines" is a real-time tactical wargame masterpiece that confidently encompasses the RPG, Strategy, and Puzzle game genres. Gamers can finally enter a world that tempers the reality of stealth combat with the bravado and fun of the big screen war epics.

Commandos is all about gripping, non-linear gameplay with strong, lovable characters that you lead in and out of lethal danger. Your goal is to keep your team alive while they stick it to the formidable German War Machine of WWII. They are your boys.... your "A-team". Ignacio Perez, lead Game Designer, has lovingly crafted missions from the actual history of the WWII Commando forces. Each mission briefing is presented in the authentic movie-reel style of the era. Historical missions, troops, locations, vehicles, armaments — it's all painstakingly recreated for your battleground. Couple this with several missions based on hit war films such as "the Dirty Dozen, the Great Escape, Force Ten from Navarone", and you have a recipe for hours of entertaining adventure.

SYSTEMS SPEC

- ESRB Rating
- "E" Everyone
- Windows 95/98
- DirectX 5.2
- P120 or greater
- 16MB Ram
- 4x CD Rom
- 1MB Fast SVGA card
- 16bit Soundcard
- US Release August 98'

Detonating this summer

Commandos takes place in the early days of WWII, when the Allied War effort was unable to stop the Germans from overtaking Europe. In the British Military, Lieutenant

over the Germans. Their mission was to sneak in, kick ass, and get out. The results are legend. We now give you the chance to re-fight their battles and create your own history.



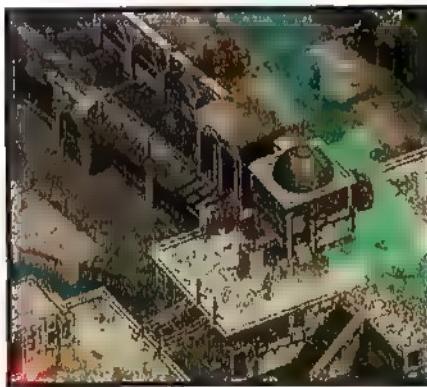
Colonel Dudley Clark was not going to let them trample freedom, and to counter the axis, he formed the Commando Regiment. The Commandos ranks were formed from exceptionally skilled combat men. Some were misfits and outcasts, some company men, who shared a common vision — victory

The game is played in real time. There are over twenty compelling missions that take place over four geographical theatres of war: Norway, North Africa, France, and Germany. Your combat team of six commandos will respond to you via voice and gestures. Each Commando has certain combat skills and weapons while possessing a "unique" temperament. Since you are behind enemy lines, you are always outmanned and outgunned — but you are not outclassed. Use your combat stealth and ingenuity to complete your goals. You are in charge.

Every mission has several secondary objectives that need to be achieved to



complete the primary objective. However, once you successfully complete your mission, you must still get your team out alive amid the chaos.

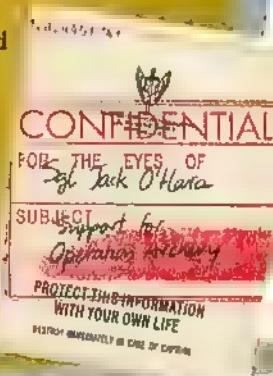


Commandos offers the complete gameplay package:

- Luscious 16bit graphics in a high resolution 3D world with a realistic, interactive environment
- Real-time scalable camera capable of multiple camera windows with resolutions up to 1024x768
- Over 1000 world animations of 450 authentic WWII vehicles, weapons, soldiers, and buildings based on 3D renders
- Realistic WWII video scenes and music complete the immersion into the Commando world
- Six Commandos with unique voices and personalities as well as weapon and combat skills
- Tenacious German unit AI stalks your boys with sight, sound, and even smell
- Career Mode tracks your mission to mission performance and rewards you for tactical genius
- Secret 20th mission that can only be unlocked by good career performance
- Co-operative multiplayer for 2-6 users with the ability to save your score for the record
- Multiplayer voice communication and competition trees on the Mplayer gaming service
- Complete training camp allows you to hone your skills before facing the enemy

Competitors can offer some of our features, but they cannot give you the "total gaming package" that Commandos: Behind Enemy Lines delivers.

- Eric Adams - US Producer



~~TOP SECRET~~

A focus on three killer Commandos features that make this game a classic.

Enemy AI - there are seven unique German soldier units in Commandos. Add to this mechanized and marine units, and you have a challenging mix of opponents. The enemy actually uses sight, sound, and even smell senses to detect your men. The Germans actually see your footprints, hear your actions, and call for backup. Each unit has a unique combat disposition; some will shoot you on sight, while others will take you captive.

Career Mode - In Commandos, you start as a Lance Corporal and earn promotions through your skillful completion of each mission. The game actually tracks your performance. If you reach a certain rank, you will be given the honor of completing the infamous 20th mission. Fear not, we have created an extensive training camp to hone your skills.

Co-op Multiplayer - in Commandos, you can join up to five of your friends and take on the Germans together. You have access to all 20 missions. As always, the game will monitor your performance and rate you at completion. You and your team can play via TCP/IP, IPX, or on the MPayer service. Voice communication is offered only on MPayer.



Up to six fully functional camera views

Producer Questions and Answers

We were able to pry the US Producer, Eric Adams, away from an intense Commandos Multiplayer game to ask some tough questions.

Q: What is your role in this project? Why is Commandos shipping in North America in August, while the European version is out now?

A: I have multiple roles. Foremost, work with Pyro Studios to enhance game elements for the North American market. This work also entails quality assurance, MPayer implementation, gameplay balancing, and market research. In addition, I assist our terrific Sales and Marketing team in getting the good word out about this revelation to the public and press.

We are holding the North American version to allow time for more promotion, and more importantly to implement several user requested features.

Q: What do you mean by "revelation"?

Commandos is a revelation of gaming ingenuity and innovation. Pyro Studios has done an amazing job on their first title. This game literally offers several layers of intense gameplay. We supply real-time action and intrigue for the RTS crowd. We promote the use of tactics and strategy in an ultra realistic WWII environment for the hard core wargamers. Commandos also features unique puzzle elements and RPG like characters. Finally, we have created

a game that plays at your pace, whether you are a hard core gamer or new to games.

Q: Commandos came out of nowhere to become a sleeper hit. What is its future?

A: There is a lot of great user buzz about this game. The gaming community has embraced both the content and presentation of Commandos. The Commandos demo is one of the hottest downloads on the Internet. I get an incredible amount of user email asking where to find it or begging for more missions. Be assured, Commandos is coming your way in August. Its sequel future looks bright!

Press Buzz

Games Domain Review

"Commandos, from these earliest glimpses, looks to be one of the more innovative titles on the horizon. It offers gameplay that should entice both action and strategy fans, and blends features from games of both genres into a combination that really hasn't been seen before".

Jeff Kang - Games Domain Review

Computer Gaming World

"...the mission design, WWII setting, and basic gameplay set this game apart. Overall, the game is incredibly promising. It could become a real-time strategy sleeper hit."

Elliot Chin - CGW

Combat Simulations Online

"Commandos is the Best Strategy game at E3."

Maurice Fitzgerald - Combat Sim.

Online Gaming Review

"If, like me, you're a big fan of movies like the Guns of Navarone and the Dirty Dozen, Commandos: Behind Enemy Lines, is sure to appeal to you. Blending subtle elements of Syndicate, Jagged Alliance, Castle Wolfenstein (the original), and Escape from Castle Colditz, Commandos easily stands out as one of the more original RTS games to be released this year."

Chris Jensen - OGR

YOUR BO

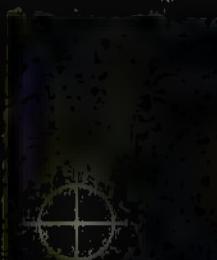
Biograph

Jerry "Tiny" McHale

Bio: Tiny McHale is one tough Irishman from Chicago. Always in trouble with authority, he loves the freedom of the Commandos. He can climb any building or mountain. Tiny is rumored to be the strongest man in the command. He also is a master of close combat warfare.



Tiny is a man who prides himself in efficiency.



Inferno actually likes playing with fire

Thomas "Inferno" Nancsek

Bio: Thomas burned his thumb at a young age and actually liked it. Since then, he has devoted his life to the taming of fire and flash. Inferno is your demolition man. If he cannot break a lock, he will gladly apply a little TNT to open it. He seems to also have a fascination with booby traps.



This French Chameleon packs a nasty cyanide bite!



Rene "Spooky" Derchamp

Bio: Rene is brains of the Commandos. He is a skillful French linguist of many passions. Foremost, he loves tricking German soldiers and leading them to their deaths. He is your spy — your access into German strongholds. He also is very handy at the "silent" kill.

ENLIST

www.eidosinteractive.com

TOP SECRET

YES... ies:



Sir Francis "Duke" Woolridge

Bio: Duke stays true to his British Aristocratic roots in most cases, but he is a rascal with the ladies and a sucker for high stakes poker. He is simply the best man in the Commandos ranks with the sniper rifle. A nice chap with a quiet and lethal demeanor.



When it's not tea time, Duke loves to hunt for relaxation

PROJECT



Sid loves both test driving and firing at German equipment

Sid "Tread" Perkins

Bio: Sid is a tough guy from New York. He is your expert on anything mechanical. If it uses gasoline - he can drive it. When not teasing Tiny, Sid is often seen practicing on the firing range with all varieties of machine guns.

TODAY

[commandos/Commandos.html](http://www.comando.com/Commandos.html)

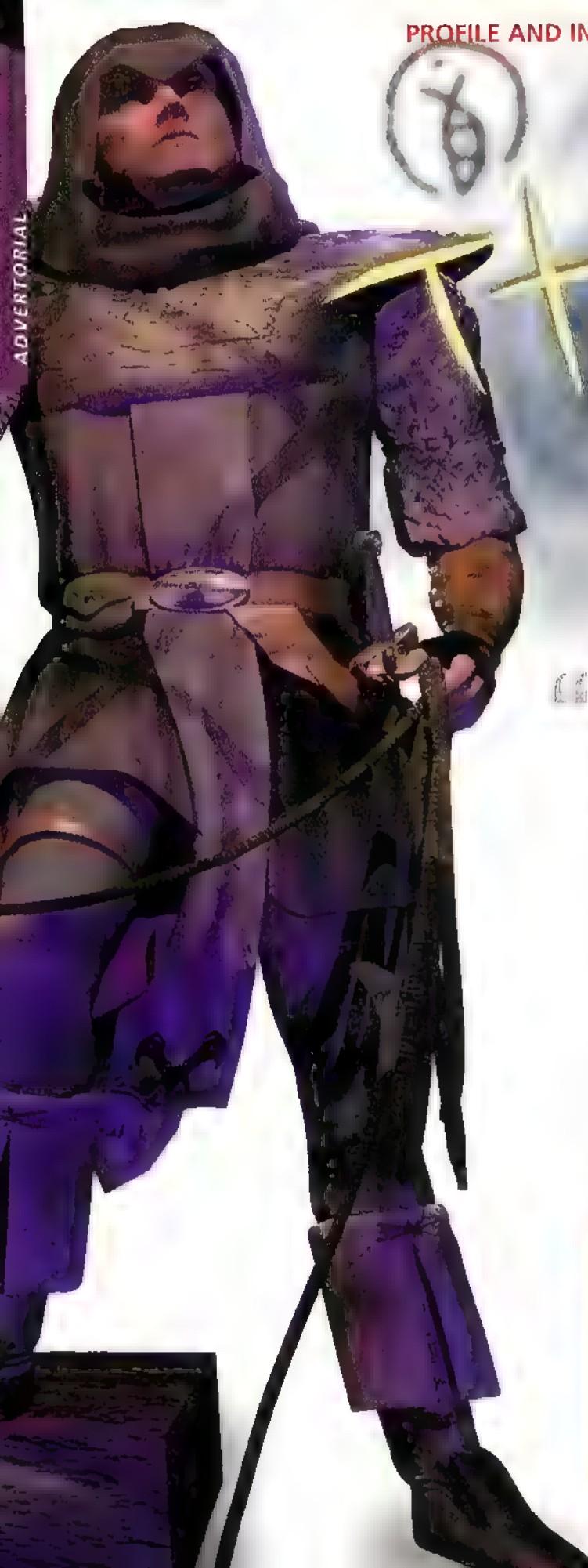


James "Fins" Blackwater

Bio: Tim is literally from down under - underwater that is. When on land he is often in foul temper, but get him in water and he is a perfect gentleman. Some say he is part fish, but to the Commandos he is the ultimate Marine specialist. Make sure he keeps the Harpoon gun pointed away from the rest of the team.



Fins loves sinking ships



The Dark Project

Thief: The Dark Project Infiltrates Your PC

Before Death came, the liars were made to feast upon the hands of the thieves and the thieves were made to ingest the tongues of their liar brothers. And we praised the Master for his judgments.

This passage from the Hammer Book of Tenets sets the stage for EIDOS Interactive and Looking Glass Studio's Thief: The Dark Project. Prepare to enter a mythical world of swords and mystery, with a touch of steam-age technology thrown in for good measure. This interesting mix makes for a dark and volatile environment in which to set this incredible new game.

You play Garrett, a tough thief in a tough city. Garrett makes his living by stealing pricey baubles from decaying royalty. He has also been known to do contract jobs for the right price, and that is just how things in Thief start out. As Garrett, you are hired by your good friend, and fence, Cutty, to steal a sword from the Bafford mansion.

As early as this first mission, the complexity and detail of this new dark world is apparent. The graphics are simply stunning, and Looking Glass

has worked closely with 3Dfx and other 3D card manufacturers to enhance these effects in accelerated modes. The lighting is excellent, which is important for an environment where hiding in the shadows is the only way to survive. In addition, the level design encourages exploration in all directions like a real city and less like a typical linear game. When breaking into a building, for example, there may be multiple points of entry.

FEATURES

- First Person Stealth-Action game.
- Direct 3D
- Sneak your way through 14 Levels.
- Advanced AI has guards call for help and sound alarms.
- Explore and realize a detailed techno-medieval world from the rooftops above to the sewers below.

Thief: The Dark Project

Some may be more difficult to enter, but less tightly guarded, while other, more obvious entrances will have more guard presence.

Unlike most of today's 1st person shooter games, in Thief, you are not a one-man arsenal. Your primary weapons here are your stealth and cunning, paired with your sword and bow. Throughout Thief you will find different types of arrows to aid you in your missions: Use a Water Arrow to extinguish torches burning on the wall, creating instant shadows to sneak through! Or switch to the explosive Fire Arrow when being subtle is no longer an option, or when you need to light up dark corridors. Other weapons include the Noisemaker Arrow, which generates the sounds of footsteps wherever it lands. This arrow is perfect for distracting a solo guard, giving you a chance to come up from behind and slice your sword through his fifth and sixth ribs.

"The graphics are simply stunning, especially on a 3D accelerator card."

Although these special arrows are helpful, it's not always a simple feat to get past the guards. An advanced sighting and hearing AI enables the guards to see you if you don't take care to stick to the shadows; they can also hear you walking on certain surfaces. However, if you're

stealthy enough, it only takes one strategically shot arrow to relieve the guard of his duties forever!

One would think that all the dead guards Garrett leaves in his wake might arouse suspicion from the others making their rounds. For the first time ever in a first person game, this is actually true! Other guards will come across dead bodies and run off to sound alarms, just as they would in real life. Of course, there is a way around this potentially incriminating predicament. Garrett can pick up guards' bodies and stash them in dark corners, or submerge them underwater so he can go about his silent business undisturbed

The use of sound in games has always helped to create a mood and warn of upcoming dangers, but the revolutionary use of sound in Thief brings the

stealth and sneaking aspects of the game to a new level. Using the new Aureal A3D sound technology, Looking Glass promises an immersive experience never before achieved on the PC. The A3D technology enables specially equipped soundcards to broadcast sound in 3D, so when action is occurring behind Garrett, the player will actually hear it behind him. In-game sound provides a sense of realism that cannot be matched in any other way, and getting the sound to occur in 3D heightens the experience and brings the game to life. Imagine sneaking down a hallway and hearing a whistling guard approaching from



behind. This sense of anticipation and suspense would not be possible without 3D sound and cannot be matched in any other game available today.

Without a great storyline, it would be difficult to fully realize the potential of all this great technology. Thankfully Looking Glass has taken care of that aspect too

As a thief for hire, Garrett has his share of enemies, and not many friends. The only person Garrett can trust is Cutty, his fence. Cutty gets Garrett jobs and buys goods off him that are too hot to sell on the open market. As the game begins, Garrett has a good thing going. After Cutty gets him the Bafford job (Garrett's first mission in Thief) things "become more difficult and complex as an intricate story begins to unfold"

Garrett crosses paths over the course of the game with the

SYSTEM REQUIREMENTS

Windows 95/98
Pentium 166 or better
3D accelerator recommended
16 Megas of RAM
Direct X 5.0 or better
Uses Aureal A3D Sound Technology

Developer: Looking Glass
Publisher: Eidos Interactive

www.eldosinteractive.com

3DFX Biography

Looking Glass Studio and 3Dfx have been working closely during the development of Thief: The Dark Project to bring a heightened sense of realism to the game through incredible graphics. Because of the stealthy style of gameplay, there are many graphic effects that transcend simply making the game look better and actually make the game PLAY better. In addition to the standard anti-aliasing and speed increases that players enjoy when employing a 3D card, 3Dfx and Looking Glass are developing enhanced lighting effects to bring out subtleties of light and shadow, very helpful when trying to sneak past a guarded entry. Enhanced special effects for magic and explosive weapons as well as fire, smoke and transparent water effects bring alive the dark underbelly of this sinister city. Transparent "ghostlike" monsters add to the surreal atmosphere. "Looking Glass Studios is upping the ante in accelerated gaming by creating a game that both looks and PLAYS better when taking advantage of 3Dfx technology."

Scott Sellers, CTO Software, 3Dfx Interactive, 3Dfx



The Thief Interview

First, can you tell me a little bit about Looking Glass? What games have you guys done in the past?

We did *Ultima Underworld 1 & 2*, which were among the first 3D games to be released, and are considered by many to be classics. We did a science-fiction action/RPG title called *System Shock*, and we've done a couple of groundbreaking flight simulators: *Flight Unlimited 1 and 2*.

What gave you the idea for *Thief*?

Thief is a logical extension of the things we liked the most about *System Shock*; specifically, sneaking around and ambushing the enemy. We discovered that we got more of an adrenaline rush from tense, stealthy gameplay than from straight-up butchery, and we realized that we

could design an entire game around just that concept.

Thief is pretty different than the standard First Person Shooter, how were you sure that the Steal Action was the way to go?

Here at LG, we don't really view *Thief* as a "shooter" any more than we did our prior games. We think that the 1st-person 3D genre has lots more to offer players than shooters alone, and we'd like to do our part in turning players on to some other possibilities of the medium. We make the sorts of games that we're interested in playing. We've also been reassured about the soundness of our design now that other stealth-based games like *GoldenEye* and *Commandos* have hit the market and are doing well.

At various parts of the game it's advantageous not to kill the next person you come across, but to silently hide in the shadows and eavesdrop. Was this a design consideration or just something that you were able to do with the engine?

It was intended from the beginning to be a key part of the design, because it's a cool, immersive way to provide clues to players and pull them into the story at the same time.

What exactly is your role on the project?

I'm the Project Leader. I try to keep everyone else on track, and I also do a lot of interviews.

What features does *Thief* have that are standard

First Person Shooter does not?

Gee, where to begin... the biggest difference is that we're building a world that's complex and detailed enough so that player can really make plans and think tactically, and wherein the AIs are smart, tough enough so that you can get some satisfaction from outwitting them. Bottom line: it's more fun to be Batman than it is to be Superman.

Do you think that *Thief* will help revolutionize the first-person gaming market?

We'd like to open people's eyes to some different possibilities of the genre; we feel that *Thief* will provide some incredible experiences to players who are tired of the old thing and ready for something new. When all is said and done, what matters is that it's fun. We're having a blast making *Thief*, and we can't wait to play it!

How complex is the storyline?

It's pretty involved. One unique aspect of the story is that you get pieces of it from different sources and have to put them together yourself. You read books and see view occasional cut scenes, overhear conversations, and piece together various clues. As a player, you can decide deeply you want to immerse yourself in the story.

How many different weapons are there? Sorry, that's classified. I will say that we've got some that you've never before seen in a PC game.

Does Garrett have any other tricks up his sleeve?

He might, but he's not saying.

Thief: The Dark Project Infiltrates Your PC (continued)

Hammerites These religious fanatics have no tolerance for Garrett or his profession. As the game progresses, Garrett has multiple encounters with the Hammerites and their trademark warhammers. There is nothing worse than fighting a fanatic, they have no sense of reason. You can't bribe them and they don't take to being conned. Life in a Hammerite prison is nothing to look forward to.

Garrett also has run-ins with city and palace guards, as well as creatures from a dark and mysterious underworld. In Looking Glass's attempt to center the game around stealth aspects, some levels are

designed so that they can be accomplished entirely by sticking to the shadows and pick-pocketing guards that hold items vital to completing an area (keys for example).

Between each mission is a cut-scene, setting up the details of the next mission. Some of these are simple, objective describing animations, whereas many others advance the plot of the game. The style of these is that of a hand painted image, sprinkled with computer animations. The effect is as striking as the game itself, and

lends another layer of realism to the atmosphere of this Looking Glass story.

All in all, *Thief* is top-notch. From the solid controls and a fantastic lighting system to the artificial intelligence and gripping storyline, *Thief* is poised to put a new spin on the first person action game genre. *Thief: The Dark Project* is looking to carve out its own niche and strike silently in the night, like a thief in the dark.

Industrial Disease

INDUSTRY GIANT Comes Up Short Across the Board

by Tim Carter

Like so many other games, **INDUSTRY GIANT** is an incomplete product that should never have left the warehouse. What's worse, the design and programming flaws here are compounded, as usual, by insultingly bad documentation. I know that it's possible to write a decent manual for a computer game; it still happens occasionally. Why I-Magic seems incapable of it, I have no idea.

The Clock Is Running

As the title suggests, **INDUSTRY GIANT** is a game of corporate development and market dominance. It offers a multitude of scenarios and campaigns covering a time period roughly from the 1960s through the 21st century. You must borrow money to build a manufacturing and retailing empire



APPLIANCE PARK The layout of **INDUSTRY GIANT** looks a lot like **SIMCITY 2000**, but without the number of options. Check out the wasted space on the interface, too.

supported by your own transportation system. Winning is generally determined by profit and your ability to drive your competitors out of business (or take them over).

The game is played in realtime, but for some unfathomable reason, the designers couldn't see their way clear to add variable speeds or a decent pause function. The clock runs the whole time you are making decisions or researching your options. Since you need to select and purchase retail and manufacturing outlets and build your own transportation system, it can take you a year or more of game time just to get your first product to market. Once you're well into the game and your empire is functioning smoothly, you're left sitting around waiting for time to pass.

While the game ran smoothly for the most part, at times the lack of information seemed like a bug. For instance, if you plan a trucking system badly, say, by putting too many trucks on the same road, your trucks will stack up outside your depot, and the ensuing traffic jam may halt your entire distribution network. Unfortunately, you have no way of knowing why some trucks refuse to move; the

computer won't notify you of the problem or identify the bottleneck. Sometimes the bottleneck is invisible: I once had trains stopped outside completely empty stations for no apparent reason. This can be extremely frustrating, particularly if your empire is vast, with complex and overlapping routes and interdependent supply systems.

Bill Who?

The technical hiccups in **INDUSTRY GIANT** are bad enough, yet they pale beside the conceptual flaws. Winning in **INDUSTRY GIANT** is all about transportation networks and competitive retailing.

Retail Stores



BUILD THOSE BIKES But don't worry about making the best bike. Just make sure your product ships more efficiently than your competitor's.

While I can see the logic behind the retail aspect, is there any major corporation today that actually depends on a wholly owned, efficient railway network for its success? You don't see the Justice Department chasing after Bill Gates because his trains refuse to carry Netscape, do you?

Even more unrealistically, you can't research new products—they just come on the market according to a preset schedule. Thus, you have no fights over patent rights, no competition for technological advantages, no pacing the market. Moreover, while it's possible to advertise, I found it almost never made financial sense to do so.

Instead, you are left juggling train schedules and creating a production system that can efficiently supply a retail empire with a range of goods. There's nothing wrong with a game that simulates this, as long as it doesn't claim to be replicating or even pretending to replicate contemporary business.

Beating your competitors in **INDUSTRY GIANT** has little or nothing to do with the quality of your products. The game assumes that all are equal, and that demand is constant. Thus, there are no rewards for researching or producing better widgets (or software). I can't help thinking that this is a

reflection of the way **INDUSTRY GIANT**'s producers view their own market. Clearly they don't see the value in developing complete, quality products, or investing in ancillary goods like, say, documentation. I can only hope that the real-life market is just a tad more discriminating than the one simulated here. CGW

COMPUTER GAMING WORLD



APPEAL: For chronic RAILROAD TYCOON addicts who need a methadone-like substitute.

PROS: Looks nice at times.

CONS: Bad docs; no variation in game speed; unexplained glitches in transportation system; weak premise.

DIFFICULTY: Intermediate.

REQUIREMENTS: Pentium 90, Windows 95, 16MB RAM, 2MB hard-drive space, 4x CD-ROM, DirectX-compatible sound and graphics.

3D SUPPORT: None.

MULTIPLAYER SUPPORT: None.

Price: \$29.95

Publisher: Interactive Magic
Research Triangle Park, NC
(800) 789-1524

www.imagicgames.com

Extreme Tedium

Some Nice Touches Are Lost in a Sea of Bugs and Clichés

by Lance Larka

The story is a familiar one: a dying world, scarce resources, two competing clans with different ideologies, only one will survive... (yawn). What's the point? Why would anyone wish to play this severely overused strategy plot line? Well, having the ability to customize your units (including their AI tendencies) is a good place to start. Unfortunately, despite the integration of these long overdue features to the genre, EXTREME TACTICS still failed to pique my interest.

A Pinch Too Little, a Year Too Late

In this flimsy imitation of better strategy games, you play either the altruistic Hammerhead or the baneful Bloodfox clans in the dual 11-mission linear campaigns. 11



APPEAL: Collectors who need every sci-fi strategy game.



PROS: Vehicle design, customizable AI, and unit experience are welcome additions.

CONS: Incredible number of bugs; bad interface; a story so canned it's tin.

DIFFICULTY: Easy

REQUIREMENTS: Pentium 120, Windows 95, 16MB RAM, 30MB hard-drive space, 4x CD-ROM, SVGA graphics; supports Windows-compatible sound cards.

3D SUPPORT: None.

MULTIPLAYER SUPPORT: TCP/IP; (1 CD per player).

Price: \$49.95

Publisher: Piranha Interactive Publishing Inc.
Tempe, Arizona
(602) 491-0500

www.extreme-tactics.com

one-player skirmish missions, or head-to-head against up to three other players over the Net. In terms of actual play, you are forced to use the ancient stratagem of harvest, build, and overwhelm to withstand the enemy's initial wave attacks and complete the rather bland missions.

The main innovation of EXTREME TACTICS is the design-unit screen, in which you match up standard body types, movement methods, shielding, scanners, and, of course, weapons to make the perfect vehicle for whatever tactical situation you're in. The other innovation is being able to modify your units' AI behavior, from pursuit ranges to automatic repair triggers. Unfortunately, the AI frequently ignores your settings.

All your units are built and remotely controlled from your comfy Mobile Command Center (MCC). Logically, if your MCC is destroyed, you lose the mission. It's too bad that the logic ends here. All units in the game have a starting to-hit percentage that grows in relation to their battle experience. The more they fight, the higher the percentage gets. And if the unit dies, the experience is lost, but why? If the units are controlled remotely from the MCC,



SAND IN MY POCKET When zoomed-in, the impressive detail doesn't help much, since units that are flying at you are off-screen.

doesn't it make more sense for the controllers *inside* the MCC to gain experience and keep the increased to-hit percentage from unit to unit instead of losing it?

Error: Operating System Not Found

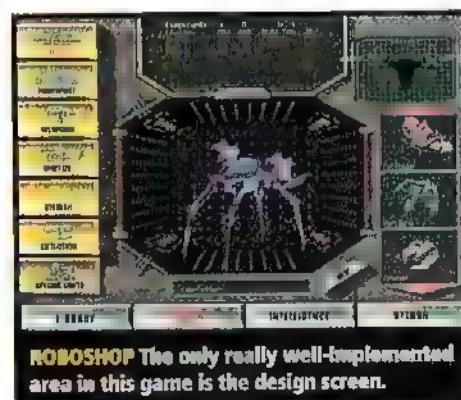
This game still would have been decent if it weren't for the terrible interface and the bugs. The interface is your standard sidebar button array with menu functions, mini-map, and main map. Both the main map and mini-map can be zoomed, but doing so removes so much area from the main map that you can't even see to the extent of your units' visual range, and it makes moving your units a definite chore.

But when the view is zoomed out, the units are so small that I had trouble telling which was which, and selecting individual units in a pack was next to impossible. The mini-map is so skimpy on

detail that you often can't even tell the difference between friendly and enemy forces with it. There is a set of buttons on the bottom of the main screen that is quite useful. Included are such things as Repair, Center on MCC, and Retreat to MCC. These buttons are nice, but they block a section of the main screen (and the items sitting there), making it difficult to see or select those items.

I found too many bugs to list here, but I'll pass on a choice few. After loading a saved game, many of my units' AI settings had been reset to the factory defaults, and areas of the map that I had explored before the save were covered up. What's most annoying, speeding up the game only affects the movement rate of units... not the amount of time it takes to build them or repair them, which makes the already slow build-up process exceedingly tedious.

I applaud Piranha and developer Media Station for attempting to add some long overdue features to the strategy genre, but I give them poor marks for focusing only on that and skimping on what in the end is the most important feature there is: enjoyment. CGW



ROBOSHOP The only really well-implemented area in this game is the design screen.

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Not Pong

Finally—A Game That Gets Tennis Right

by Tasos Kaiafas

Tennis, like track or horse racing, doesn't always translate well to a computer game. It's difficult not to view it as little more than an advanced game of PONG, which is absurd—PONG doesn't even have a net.

But seriously, many computer tennis games in the past have admittedly conveyed an experience similar to that of PONG: Hit the ball back and forth until someone misses. They lacked the complexity of real-life tennis, mostly because all the players were similar in ability. Fortunately for tennis fans, GAME, NET & MATCH is different. If you overlook the cheesy title and '70s-style box art, what you'll find inside is a well-thought-out tennis game with a lot of

COMPUTER GAMING WORLD



APPEAL:

Anyone who's been waiting for a decent tennis game.



PROS: RPG-like character creation, thoughtful design, good control; Internet play.

CONS: No difficulty levels, easy first serves, mediocre AI

DIFFICULTY: Easy.

REQUIREMENTS: Pentium 133, Windows 95, 16MB RAM, 100MB hard-drive space, 4x CD-ROM drive, 2MB graphics card (DirectX compatible), DirectX 5.0.

3D SUPPORT: Direct3D-compatible cards, 3Dfx.

MULTIPLAYER SUPPORT: LAN, Internet (2 players); 1 CD per player.

Price: \$39.99
Publisher: BlueByte Software
Schaumburg, IL
(847) 995-9981

www.bluebyte.com

great features, but one that might get a bit too easy after a while.

TENNIS RPG?

The first place to go in the game is, obviously, the training area. There, you can learn the controls and get a feel for the game. A ball machine at the other end of the court fires the kind of shot you want to practice against: deep or short ground strokes, lobs, and cross-court ground strokes; random ground strokes and lobs; or completely random shots. You can also practice serves, but because of the way you serve in the game, there's not much need for practice—once you get the timing down, you won't miss the first serve much during a match, unless you try something extreme.

On the court, you can play a single match against the computer or against another person (on a LAN or over the Internet) by choosing from a few male or female characters with different ability levels, then selecting the court surface (clay, concrete, grass, or carpet) and the number of sets.

The real fun in GAME, NET & MATCH comes from creating your own player for season play and entering him or her in various tournaments and competitions for prize money and ranking points. To create a player, you first choose a character, then you distribute 30 points among six characteristics (with a maximum of 10 points each): forehand, backhand, volley, service, speed, and strength.

Throughout the season you can choose from a list of competitions. The game lists date, location (with



PRACTICE MAKES PERFECT Turn on the ball machine to fine-tune your game.



HOLDING COURT Play matches in a variety of arenas and on different court surfaces.

a nice variety of arena graphics), court type, and prize money for each tournament, and the more the prize money the tougher the opponents. Enter an upper-echelon competition before your player is ready and you might not make it past the first round, losing valuable time and ranking points in the process. You have to be smart to make it to the big time.

The best part is that your player's abilities increase, depending



PLAYER DIMENSION The 3D-rendered players look best through a 3D card, though the game doesn't require one.

on your style of play. For example, if you like to play a serve-and-volley style, your serve and volley levels will increase after each competition. If you don't score many backhand points, your backhand ability won't improve. So, as the season progresses, your player continually gets better with experience—as in an RPG.

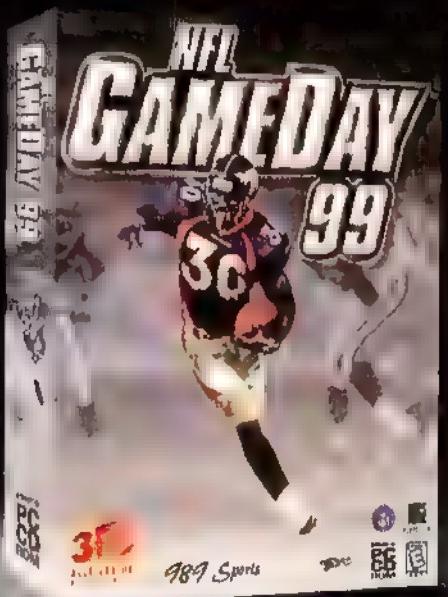
FORTY LOVE

GAME, NET & MATCH has a lot that will please tennis fans. However, smart tennis players will find certain strategies that a computer AI will repeatedly fall for. It also seems that your racket hits balls that should be too far away, making the game a bit too forgiving. Another oddity is that computer players can dive for balls, although I've

never seen my guy do it—and there are times when I wished he would have.

More advanced players will be harder to beat no matter what you throw at them, and it even seems that computer opponents get better and worse at different times during the match, adding a dynamic element to their game. But once you get your player up to top-caliber status, you'll be hard to beat by a computer opponent, which really points to a glaring omission: difficulty levels. Not only can you get good enough to beat computer opponents regularly, but it's also a bit too easy to simply hit the ball no matter how new your player is. As with serves, you'll make an unforced error only if you try something extreme. But then that's what it usually takes to beat the best. **CGW**

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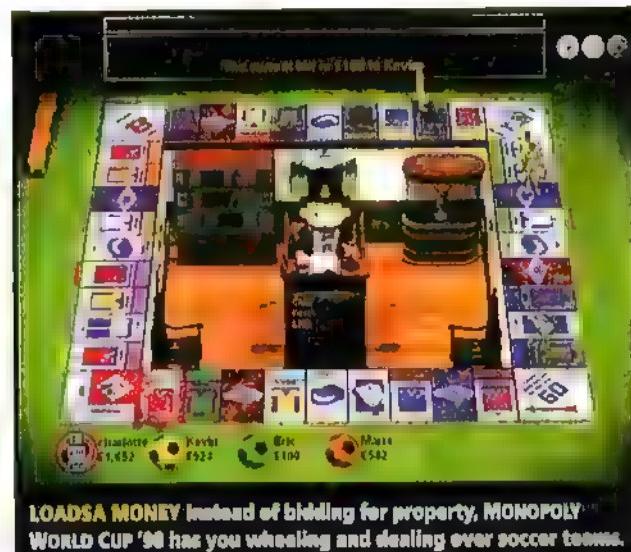
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Do Not Pass GOOOOOAL!

Buy and Sell Soccer Franchises in MONOPOLY WORLD CUP '98

by Charles Ardai

When they were called upon to dress MONOPOLY in Star Wars trappings last year, the folks at Hasbro Interactive threw themselves into the assignment with obvious passion, and adapted every element of the game that could be adapted. They've done likewise with the WORLD CUP '98 edition. You've got FIFA's 22 top-ranked soccer teams in place of the traditional properties; France's four largest stadiums instead of railroads; stadium lighting and soda concessions in place of utilities; "Home" and "Away" cards in place of "Chance" and "Community Chest"; soccer-ball shaped dice;



LOADSA MONEY Instead of bidding for property, MONOPOLY WORLD CUP '98 has you wheeling and dealing over soccer teams.

and beautifully animated human players in place of the familiar shoe, iron, and top hat game tokens.

When you land on a property, you'll hear that team's national anthem play while an animation shows the players in their native landscape. End your turn and your player kicks a soccer ball gracefully across the board to the next player. Land on "Go to Jail" and Uncle Pennybags benches you while the crowd boos. The two major differences between the WORLD CUP edition and the STAR WARS edition (other than the use of Scotland rather than Dagobah for Baltic Avenue) are that the WORLD CUP edition doesn't limit its customization to mere cosmetic changes, and that the WORLD CUP edition is actually playable.

World Cup Rules!

STAR WARS MONOPOLY boasted tons of animation and clips from the films, but the game ran slowly as a result. This edition has just as much animation, but it's blessedly free from delays. The clever opening and closing sequences stutter a little, but the game itself runs smoothly and swiftly.

with the one directly behind it. In other words, if you happen to own the most expensive property when you lose a match play, you suddenly find yourself owning a less-expensive property. It's not that you trade teams with the other player—it's that the value of your property changes, as if Vermont Avenue moved uptown to become a purple property while St. Charles Place became a light-blue "bargain" district.

These "World Cup rules" add not just extra soccer flavor but new strategic dimensions as well—so much, in fact, that people who care nothing about soccer will enjoy playing the game. The only shortcomings are that the new elements don't come into play often enough and they are based largely on random results rather than on gamers' decisions. Still, they are the first new MONOPOLY gameplay rules since Parker Brothers agreed to canonize the "Free Parking rule."

MONOPOLY WORLD CUP '98 will find its natural market among soccer fans, who'll enjoy it as a keepsake or a novelty. But others will enjoy it, too, for bringing a welcome breath of fresh air into the somewhat musty traditions of MONOPOLY. And everyone will enjoy watching Pennybags dive to make a save. It's a treat to see the old gent get some exercise. *CGW*



IT'S A GOAL. Get the ball past Uncle Pennybags and you have could win an extra die.

COMPUTER GAMING WORLD

★★★★★

APPEAL: Soccer fans, gamers who want to try MONOPOLY with a twist.

PROS: Plenty of customization; great animation; two new game features provide real soccer flavor.

CONS: The new gameplay elements are random rather than skill-based; repeated animation soon becomes familiar.

DIFFICULTY: Easy.

REQUIREMENTS: Pentium 100, Windows 95, 16MB RAM, 4x CD-ROM, SVGA graphics, Windows-compatible sound card, DirectX 5.0.

3D SUPPORT: None.

MULTIPLAYER SUPPORT: LAN, Internet Gaming Zone (up to six players); 1 CD per player.

Price: \$29.95
Publisher: Hasbro Interactive
Beverly, MA
(508) 921-3700
www.hasbrointeractive.com

Brain Drain

An IQ Test, a Tile-matching Puzzle, and Board Games for Bored Gamers

The Ultimate IQ Test



Publisher: Virtual Entertainment
Price: \$24.95
www.virtualentertainment.com

Calling a game THE ULTIMATE IQ TEST is begging people to ignore it. Most of us got our fill of IQ tests back in grade school and would not voluntarily submit to more. If you choose to ignore this one, though, you'll be missing out on something considerably more entertaining than its name suggests.

As I remember them, IQ tests contained hundreds of tedious questions and took hours to complete. This one contains only 30 questions and has a 60-minute time limit; more importantly, the questions are not just tough, they're tantalizing. What two different three-letter words can you insert between "CON" and "ENT"



to produce nine-letter words? What number should replace "X" in the sequence "25, 22, 15, X, 10, 19, 24"?

Finish the test, and the game scores your performance in each category (math, verbal, spatial, knowledge) and displays your IQ. You can go back over the test for explanations of the questions you

got wrong, or get yourself in the mood for your next test with five classic brain-teasers. The brain-teasers are overly familiar and not presented with the panache of SMART GAMES, and some of the supporting material for the test itself is trite ("Most people, by definition, are of average intelligence," intones a host), but, otherwise, THE ULTIMATE IQ TEST does a good job of living up to its name.

The answers, incidentally, are "TIN," "DIM," and "4." And if you can figure out why "4" is right in five minutes or less, this test is for you. —Charles Ardai

Sorry



Publisher: Hasbro Interactive
Price: \$19.95
www.hasbrointeractive.com

If you've ever played the board game Sorry, you'll remember how great it felt to land on top of your opponent and send him back to the start, or even better, to draw the much sought after Sorry card that allowed you to bring a new pawn out of the your home base and send another player back. Sure, Hasbro's new computer boardgame edition allows you to do all that. But even when you're playing in multiplayer mode, if you don't have a friend



sitting across the board from you when you do the dastardly deed, the glee factor is somewhat watered down

The object of the game is to get your four pawns out, around the board, and safely back to their home base before your opponents get to theirs. In the classic game, you pick up a card from the center prior to each turn, which gives you instructions on how to move. In the CD-ROM version there's also a strategy option, whereby your cards are dealt before the game begins. It's up to you to play your hand as strategically as possible. Other than that, the gameplay is the same as that of the original game.

SORRY is clearly intended for kids. The cute animation allows your pawns to morph into different shapes as they move around the board. If you're about to kick someone back to the start, your pawn might turn into a spade and bash your opponent into the ground; if your pawn makes it home, he might curl up in bed and go to sleep. While younger gamers will enjoy this upbeat adaptation of the board game, adults should stick with classics like SCRABBLE or MONOPOLY. —Charlotte Panther



see the game pieces flashing before your eyes after you've left the computer. One of the first computer games to have this effect on me was Activision's SHANGHAI, a game in which you must remove pairs of sufficiently exposed tiles until you clear the board, or can no

longer move. While NAHAN's gameplay is similar, the game sadly lacks that mesmerizing quality of SHANGHAI.

The tiles in NAHAN are rectangular rather than hexagonal (you can also play a three-dimensional version using cubes). Players can select from various tile sets and layouts and can listen to a variety of uninspired (but unobtrusive) mood music. Points are awarded for each pair of tiles removed, for removing a significant number of tiles, and for completing a game quickly. If you lose a game, you can replay it or watch the computer play it. Hints are also available. You can also use an editor with some nifty controls to generate new layouts.

The biggest challenge in playing NAHAN is not the gameplay itself, but dealing with the visual assaults of riotous colors, clashing backgrounds, and tiles that are often hard to distinguish from one another. The added factor of having to rotate layouts to see all playable pieces makes this game even more "challenging." —Pete Schlunk

Nahan: The Ultimate 3D Puzzle Game



Publisher: GlobalStar Software
Price: \$19.95
www.globalstar.on.ca

You know you're really hooked on a game when you can still

Jane's F-15

Moving Mud Is the Key to Success in JANE'S F-15

by Tom "KC" Basham

Here's the problem: The Iraqis are up in arms again, preparing to launch a full-scale invasion into a neighboring country. The United Nations peacekeeping force has to persuade Saddam to stay at home instead. The President has given the word and your F-15E squadron takes off on a series of preemptive strikes. You're going to war, and everyone expects you to hit your targets when you get there.

Ground-Pounding

Many of us have more fun dueling at 20,000 feet than moving mud, but the F-15E Strike Eagle exists primarily to blow up things on the ground (for tips on F-15 air-to-air combat, see last month's *Gamer's Edge* strategy piece).

While it inherited reasonable air-to-air capability from the original F-15 design, it's very unlikely it will ever be used in that role. The U.S. Air Force has only four or five dozen E-model airframes in its inventory, and it's not going to waste them on air-to-air missions when it has F-15Cs and F-16s to carry out the job. Consequently, if you're going to have any fun in JANE'S F-15, you'd better be good at making ground targets explode.

Basically, executing air strikes has two major steps: Designating a target and delivering ordnance. Of the two, designating the target is usually the most labor-intensive. There are several ways to designate targets, depending upon

what equipment you're carrying. You can use a Maverick's seeker head to find and acquire a target, use the infrared camera, create a high-resolution map (HRM), or simply click on an object inside the HUD field. Each method is best suited for specific scenarios. You don't need to be familiar with all targeting methods to enjoy JANE'S F-15; but the more types you're comfortable with, the more options

you'll have during combat.

I find that I generally rely on HRMs, occasionally clicking a target of opportunity that suddenly appears in the HUD. Using the HUD, however, requires that you be able to maneuver the mouse

and click on specific pixels, and it isn't a reliable method under most circumstances. Also, I tend to click just a bit *beyond* the desired target, since I've found that free-fall weapons in F-15 have a tendency to fall short of a targeted location

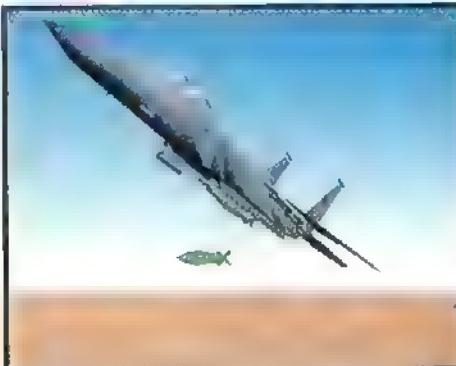
In the case of a building, I usually aim for the top of the building, which actually signifies a point on the ground just *past* the building. This isn't very realistic (in real life, I'd aim for the base of the building), but it substantially improves



DAMAGE ASSESSMENT As exciting as it is to be near ground zero when your bombs go off, it generally puts you into a very vulnerable position.



KILL FROM AFAR The F-15 has released its bombs, but it's still a mile from the target, thanks to left bombing.



TILT! Rolling the wings slightly during the pitch-up causes this bomb to miss.

See the Review

OVERVIEW • 4.5 STARS



SWEET RELEASE It's always beneficial to be as far as reasonably possible from enemy air defenses when you release your payload.

my hit ratio in the game. One caveat: If you plan to ripple-release multiple bombs, set the target point slightly *ahead* of the target. The trailing bombs will fall past the first one. The distance between impacts depends on the interval between releases. If you aim directly at (or just beyond) the target, your later bombs will probably sail harmlessly past.

The Pause That Refreshes

F-15 includes an outstanding feature: The MPDs (Multipurpose Displays) continue to work even when you pause the game. The best way to locate and designate targets is to select the desired radar mode, let it paint the area a couple of times, then press the Pause key. While the action is

in multimillion-dollar jets, so before they install a back seat in a fighter they have a good reason. The guy in back (GIB) isn't there to sightsee; he's busy managing weapons and targets. The pilot, meanwhile, is busy flying the aircraft, trying not to get shot or fly into a mountain. While F-15 isn't as detailed as real life, there's still a lot of work to do, and it's hardly "realistic" to expect a single person to complete the work of two people in real-time. Using the pause function during strike missions lets

you better simulate two distinct crew members with one player.

Here's the Pitch

Once you designate the target, it's time to move in and kill it. Now, we all know that it's generally a very bad idea to make multiple passes over the same target. Anyone you didn't kill on the first pass will be waiting for you the

second time around. Antiaircraft guns, shoulder-launched SAMs, and even small arms fire will likely greet your return. Sometimes, though, you have no choice. You may have missed the primary target, gotten only some of the specified structures, or encountered a system failure of some sort. Lives may depend on your making another pass. That's why I like loft bombing.

You may think, "That's cheating!" Given the product's emphasis on realism, how can anyone possibly suggest such a brazen cheat as actually stopping the game? Well, remember that the F-15 sports a crew of two. The USAF isn't really big on giving joyrides

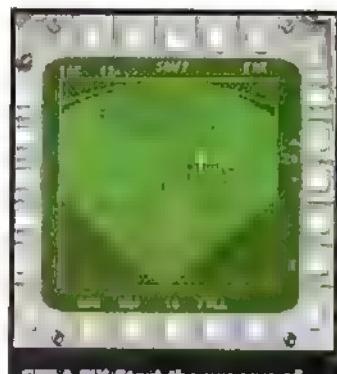
With loft bombing (described on page 462 of the manual), you lob free-fall bombs by executing a well-timed pitch-up maneuver. The result looks much like an underhand softball throw. The maneuver has its flaws: You can attack only one structure per pass (an airfield, for example, may have numerous buildings that you need to destroy), and it's more susceptible to alignment problems. Still, it keeps you farther away from the target and any surface-to-air weapons. Since this delivery method leaves me in a climb, I roll 135 degrees immediately after release, pull hard on the stick, and slice the nose back down. Once I

get the aircraft back on the deck, I level out, extend away from the target, circle around, and attack it again from another direction.

I learned another trick while using loft bombing several

years ago flying TORNADO. I routinely lobbed bombs over hills, never climbing high enough to expose myself to return fire. To use this trick in F-15 you will have to acquire the target somehow. Try popping up 40 or more miles away from the target and isolating it in an HRM. Quickly dive back to the dirt, proceed to the nearest hill, and toss a bomb

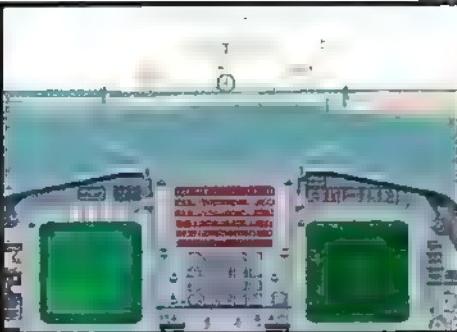
Combat Loadout



GET A FIX Start the process of designating your target by making an HRM (high-resolution map) of the target area.



GET THE HELL OUT! Roll and pull off the target after releasing your bombs—don't continue straight into the air defenses.



STAY ON TARGET A good lineup with 19 seconds before the pitch-up maneuver.

much the way a coworker tosses a paper wad over a cubicle wall at work

Loft bombing requires more practice than AUTO or CDIP modes. First, you have to initiate the attack from an appropriate distance. If you try to start a loft attack too close in, you won't get the proper HUD symbology (specifically, you won't get the TPULL counter). You must be careful not to roll the aircraft—even slightly—when you initiate the pull-up. The slightest roll will pull the nose off the target and sling the bombs off to the side. As with all bomb runs, align your heading with the Azimuth Steering Line (ASL) and fly straight and level for several seconds before initiating the climb. If you can't achieve proper lineup before the climb, or if you let the aircraft roll as the nose comes up, pull off and prepare for a new attack run.

Granted, you are exposed during the sudden pitch-up, but I generally find that my total exposure time is less than in a direct attack, and I can turn away from the target sooner. Loft bombing is not a "magic bullet," though, and should be one of many attack techniques at your disposal. Every technique you master increases your chances of successfully executing and surviving each new attack. CGW



DON'T DELAY Start the attack early enough so that you have time to line up before the TPULL counter expires.

The AGM-65 Maverick comes in several variants. The AGM-65A/B/D models use a 125-pound shaped-charge warhead designed for antitank warfare. These models dive on the target in an effort to penetrate a tank's more vulnerable top armor. The AGM-65E/F/G variants, meanwhile, carry a larger, 300-pound warhead designed for better penetration. The E/F/G versions are used primarily against fixed structures and ships, with the F version aiming for the waterline of a ship. The different models use a variety of guidance methods. The AGM-65A/B models are television-guided; the AGM-65C is laser-guided; the AGM-65D/F models use IR guidance; and the AGM-65E uses an improved laser guidance system.

The Maverick has a long history. First test flights were conducted in 1969, with the

AGM-65A reaching operational capability in 1972. Final delivery of some 5,000 missiles to the U.S. Navy occurred in 1994. The first combat usage was in Vietnam during January and February of 1973, scoring 13 hits out of 18 launches. Israeli aircraft fired 50 Mavericks during the 1973 Yom Kippur War, claiming 47 successes (42 hits and five near misses intended to disable, not destroy, targets). In 1975, Iranian aircraft scored 12 hits out of 12 launches against Iraqi tanks. More than 5,100 Mavericks were fired in Operation Desert Storm, with official reports claiming approximately a 90 percent success rate for TV- and IR-guided variants and approximately a 60 percent success rate for the Maverick's laser-guided variants.



AGM-65 MAVERICK



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Windows 95



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StarCraft

Master the Terrans

by Elliott Chin

In our previous two strategy articles, we discussed general tips. Here, we begin the racial breakdowns for *STARCRAFT*. This month, we start with the Terrans.

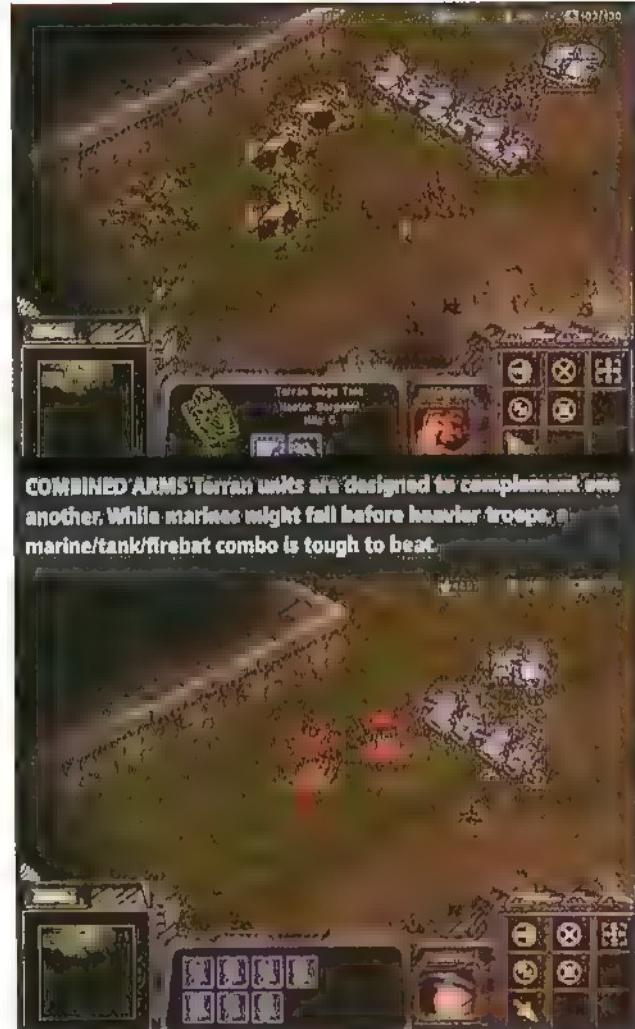
The Terrans have perhaps the most versatile lot of units, with some quick and cheap infantry and a fair share of durable heavy hitters. Terran players must also always remember to make use of the SCV's ability to repair units. Terran mechanized units aren't as cheap as Zerg units, nor as durable as Protoss units, so the equalizer is their ability to be repaired.

Terran players also need to remember to employ combined arms. Whereas Zerg players can get by with just hydralisks or mutalisks, and Protoss players can wipe out the opposition with just a few zealots, Terran players really need to build a force of complementary units. While it is certainly harder to coordinate, the Terran attack force, when composed of a proper mix of combined arms, can be devilishly hard to defeat.

Now we'll break down each unit and its natural roles. When you're reading up on a particular unit's usefulness, make sure you take into account the type of damage it inflicts and the kind of target it is classified as. Read the "Hints, tips, and other information" folder in the *STARCRAFT README.HLP* file for a detailed list of the damage and size type of each unit.

See the Review

JULY ISSUE • 5 STARS



Marine

Strengths: Marines, which are cheap and quick to produce, are great cannon fodder and antiair units. Put them in bunkers for excellent defense. If you use them on the offensive, always research the stim-pack ability and the range upgrade. Without the range upgrade, they are at a terrible disadvantage against hydralisks and upgraded dragoons (when in bunkers, marines won't be able to fire back since those two units have better range). Also, since they deal normal damage to all targets and have a very fast rate of fire, they remain useful versus enemy infantry and heavy units. Marines, when paired with goliaths, make excellent air deterrents. They are good against mutalisks, but only if you research at least one armor upgrade and stim packs. Marines are also good as siege tank support.



Weaknesses: Marines are zealot fodder. Because they die easily, don't expect them to bail you out when hydralisks and zealots overrun your defenses. Marines are toast versus siege tanks, especially because they willingly stand in neat little clusters—easy siege tank targets.

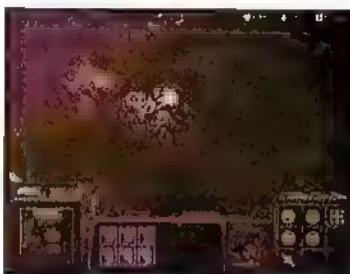
Marines have the following ability:

Stim Pack: Using a stim pack costs 10 hit points to the unit, but doubles the unit's attack rate and speed for approximately 15 seconds. Use it on the offensive to make marines and firebats especially nasty. Since they die easily, you might as well give them a stim shot so they go down blazing.

Firebat

Strengths: Firebats are good for one purpose: burning through infantry. They are the Terrans' answer to zerglings and zealots. Their splash damage adds to their effectiveness. Employ them to stop zealot rushes. Research the stim pack ability and use that just before firebats meet the enemy so they can close the distance quickly. The firebats' attack is not canceled by a Dark Swarm. Also because they are mobile units, they can attack tanks without being hit by the targeted tank. In addition to dismantling zergling and zealot attacks, firebats provide good ground support for siege tanks.

Weaknesses: Firebats are ineffective against hard targets such as ultralisks and gothas. They can't attack air units. You shouldn't use them for much besides taking down zealots, zerglings, Terran infantry, and hydralisks.



Ghost

Strengths: Ghosts are best as support versus enemy Terrans or Protoss. They can neutralize all Terran and Protoss mechanized units, call down devastating nuclear strikes, and cloak themselves. Faced with the durability and overwhelming power of scouts, battlecruisers, and carriers, ghosts are the Terrans' best answer.

Weaknesses: Ghosts are nearly useless versus the Zerg, since lockdown does not affect any Zerg unit. Also, ghosts deal plasma damage, which means they are do only quarter damage (2.5 damage per hit) to hard targets like tanks, ultralisks, and wraiths. Don't use them for much besides nuke calling and metal target lockdowns.

Ghosts have the following special abilities:

Lockdown: Lockdown freezes any mechanized unit and cancels any of its special abilities. Arbiters decloak all their surrounding

units, carriers recall all interceptors into their bays, science vessels can't initiate abilities or even detect cloaked units. The duration of lockdown is approximately one minute. Locked-down units can be attacked and cannot fight back. A ghost that has full

energy can neutralize two enemy units. In many cases, the ghost's lockdown is the only thing that can negate a massive carrier or scout attack. Six ghosts, which cost a total of 600 resources, can effectively castrate an army of 12 carriers, which costs at least 7,800 resources.

Cloak: Upgrade the ghost's energy so that a fully charged ghost can be cloaked and still fire off two lockdowns. Always cloak a ghost before it calls in a nuke!

Call Nuclear Strike: Ghosts can also call down nuclear strikes. When you want to put this ability into play, make sure you first research cloaking and the sight-range upgrade. The ghost must sit for approximately 15 seconds before the nuclear missile strikes. During that time, he is vulnerable to attack. If the ghost is spotted while he is cloaked, place a defensive matrix on him with a science vessel to ensure that he lives long enough to call down the nuke.



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Vulture

Strengths: Vultures are excellent scouts. The good thing about them is they are only slightly more expensive than marines and can be repaired. Don't use them unless you research spider mines and the speed upgrade. With the speed upgrade, they are the fastest unit in STARCRAFT. A group of vultures can be a quick-response team in allied games to help bail out your buddy. Because of their superior speed, Terran players can engage in hit-and-run attacks versus zealots, firing and then running away, and almost never getting hit in return. However, this tactic takes considerable baby-sitting of the vultures.

Definitely use vultures to lay down mines at choke points and near extra resource nodes. The mines won't be triggered by enemy peon units, but they will



act as nice spy units. Placing the mines at town entrances will not only alert you to attacks, but also take down some invaders as well.

Each vulture gets three mines. Once they are deployed, the mines stay cloaked until they are triggered by a nearby target. Each mine does 125 normal damage. It affects ground targets only, but it injures all units in its area of effect. All ground units except peon units, archons, and other vultures will trigger a mine.

Weaknesses: Vultures, like firebats and ghosts, deal plasma damage, which is best against small infantry. Their otherwise impressive 20 base damage is reduced to 10 versus medium targets like hydralisks and 5 against hard targets like ultralisks. Use them only against

small infantry and peon units. They cannot attack air units.

Siege Tank

Strengths: Tanks are mediocre weapons in tank mode, but in siege mode, they are hands-down the most devastating ground attack. You must research siege mode if you intend to use tanks. Set them up out of the range of towers and bunkers and you can just raze enemy defenses with impunity. Remember that the siege tanks' splash damage in siege mode *will* harm enemy units in a Dark Swarm. Siege tanks in siege mode also make excellent defenses when you pair them with bunkers and missile turrets.

Siege mode makes the tank immobile, but increases its range and bumps base damage from 30 to 70. While in siege mode, the tank also does splash damage. Unlike the firebat's splash damage, the siege tank's splash damage will hurt friendly units as well. Keep this in mind when you select targets. To make up for its increased range, a siege tank in siege mode can't hit targets right next to it.

Weaknesses: Tanks can't attack air units, nor can they attack close-range

targets when in siege mode. Thus, you must always provide them with escorts. Have firebats handy to take down zerglings and zealots (both of which destroy tanks with surprising ease) and also have either goliaths or plenty of marines for ground-to-air support. This sort of formation (tanks in siege mode with firebat support up front and marine/goliath support at the sides) is one of the game's most powerful combinations.



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Goliath

Strengths: Goliaths are excellent antiair weapons. They are good against scouts, guardians, wraiths, transports, and other hard air targets. They also have a ground attack, which helps when they are defending islands. In

those cases, they provide as much antiair support as a missile turret, but they can also field a good ground attack when shuttles manage to drop off ground attackers. Their range is good, being the same as that of a fully upgraded marine or a hydralisk. They provide excellent air support for siege tanks.

Weaknesses: They are too expensive to use as ground fodder, so support them with marines or firebats if you expect zealots or zerglings to accompany an air attack. Because they deal out

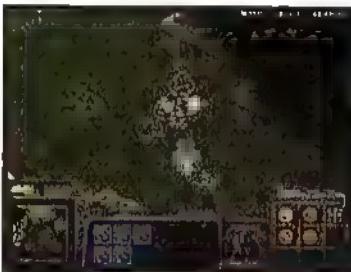


explosive damage, their effectiveness against mutalisks and scourges is diminished (half damage only). Don't rely on goliaths against Zerg air units. If you're facing scourges and mutalisks, use more marines.

Dropship

Strengths: Can carry up to eight slots of units. Terran infantry each take one slot, vultures and goliaths take two slots, and tanks take four slots.

Weaknesses: They are slower than other transports once the other transports acquire speed upgrades.



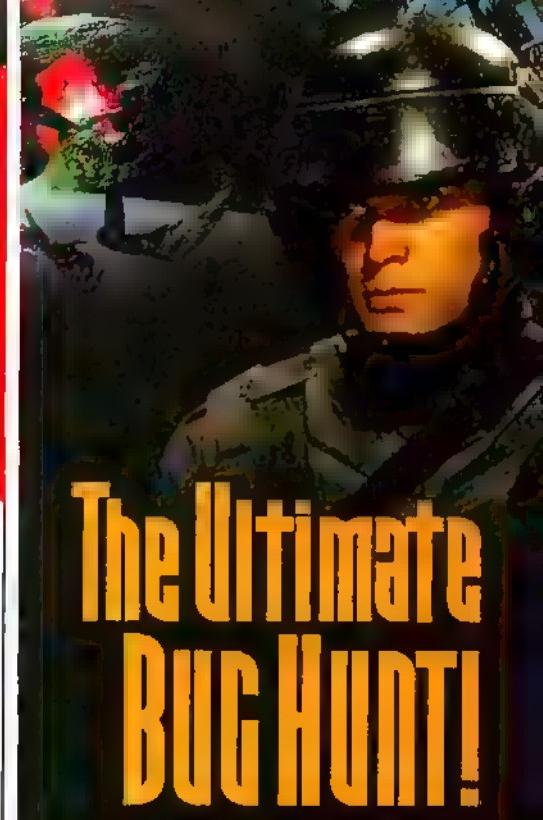
Wraith

Strengths: Wraiths are good against hard air targets such as scouts, battlecruisers, carriers, and guardians. If you use them, you must research their cloaking ability, which makes them very useful. Without it, they are a waste of money. A team of cloaked wraiths can be hell against expansion towns. Send a group of them to patrol the map and strike down any new bases the enemy is erecting. Destroy any cloak detectors first and then start attacking units and buildings.

Weaknesses: These guys are pretty expensive for such weak units. They have few hit points and fall easily to scourges, scouts, and mutalisks. Moreover, their explosive air attack operates at half strength against mutalisks and scourges. Don't rely on them to combat these two units. Their ground attack is also pretty weak, so don't use them unless your purpose is cloaked harassment.



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Science Vessel

Strengths: Science vessels can initiate three special abilities. In addition, they can automatically detect cloaked units. Especially when fighting other Terrans it is crucial to have science vessels accompanying your air forces in order to detect cloaked enemy wraiths. Their special abilities are essential for victory versus Protoss and Zerg forces, so don't neglect the research and production of science vessels.

Weaknesses: Since science vessels have no attack, you need to provide them with escorts. Plus, because of the short range of their abilities and their low hit points, they can be downed quite easily.

The science vessel has the following special abilities:

Defensive Matrix: This ability bestows 200 bonus hit points on a single unit. Like Protoss shields, these bonus hit points take full damage from any attack, regardless of the type of damage dealt. The defensive matrix will run out after 90 seconds or until the 200 hit points are lost. Science vessels come equipped with this ability.

Irradiate: This ability poisons a single target and damages any units next to the afflicted unit. Irradiate drains 199 hit points at a rate of 6-7 hit points per second. Multiple irradiates will not accelerate the drain.

Irradiate harms organic units only, so all Terran and Protoss mechanized units are immune, as is the archon. Use irradiate to eliminate clusters of hydralisks, mutalisks, guardians, and marines, all of which bunch up when they attack. You can also use this spell defensively by casting it on a mechanical unit that is under attack by melee attackers. Cast a defensive matrix to extend the mechanical unit's life, and then an irradiate on it so that it hurts all eligible nearby units that are attacking it.

EMP Shockwave: This ability completely drains all shields and energy in an area of effect. It's most effective when used against Protoss units (it effectively halves their hit points), but it's also useful for depleting the energy of queens and defilers before they can get off a broodling or dark swarm. Because dragoons, scouts, and carriers tend to bunch together when they attack, one EMP shockwave can affect an entire group of units. EMP fired into a suspected area of cloaked wraiths will also decloak the wraiths by robbing them of their energy (provided you strike the right place). EMP affects both units and buildings. If you are nuking a Protoss camp, EMP the target area just before the nuke hits. The EMP will rob the buildings of shields, and the nuke will then be able to destroy the targeted buildings.



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AIR COMBAT

F-15!



Battlecruiser

Strengths: Battlecruisers serve a highly specialized role. Always research their yamato cannon and energy upgrades and then use them to destroy towers and large ships like carriers and arbiters. On island maps, they are especially good, since siege tanks can't take down towers on islands. Battlecruisers are actually good deterrents to carriers, since the cruisers can go toe-to-toe against



them. If you provide it with the proper escorts, a battlecruiser fleet can be a very formidable force.

Weaknesses: With their slow rate of fire, they are especially vulnerable to multiple scourges and hydralisks. Escort cruisers with wraiths or have marines underneath. Also, don't rely too heavily on them for your main force. They are too expensive and too easy to destroy.

Psionic storm, plague, and ensnare are especially vexing for battlecruiser owners. Thus, target high templars and defilers as soon as you spot them.

The cruiser has the following ability:

Yamato Cannon: The yamato cannon takes approximately 5 seconds to power up, after which it can deal 250 damage to a single target.

As you can see, the Terrans have some formidable units, but many require support to fully achieve their potential. While Terrans are the first race you are likely to play, they will probably be the last for you to master. But when you do, you will find them to be the most versatile race to play. Just remember to always think ahead, because the Terrans are at their worst when reacting. Whereas a Zerg player can crank out three hydralisks if they get surprised, or a Protoss player can muster some resistance with just two zealots, Terrans are really at a disadvantage if caught off guard. So make sure you master the art of combined arms and take the fight to your enemies. CGW

The Perfect Counter

When playing the Terrans, you'll undoubtedly get trounced at least once by a horde of each unit type. Here are the best counters for all the units that could potentially end your reign.

Problem	Solution
Zergling	Firebats or bunkered marines
Hydralisk	Siege (mode) tanks; spider mines; Irradiate
Ultralisk	Restart the game
Mutalisk	Stim-packed marines and goliaths; Irradiate
Guardian	Wraiths, goliaths, and/or Irradiate
Zealot	Firebats
Dragons	Lockdown and/or siege tanks
Reaver	Lockdown; air units
High Templars	Irradiate and/or siege (mode) tanks
Scouts	Lockdown and/or cloaked wraiths
Carriers	Lockdown
Archers	EMP shockwave
Siege (mode) tanks	Wraiths and/or lockdown
Battlecruisers	Lockdown
Cloaked wraiths	Scanner sweep; science vessels; lockdown



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Strategy/Wargames**The Operational Art of War**

When you try to create a new scenario, the good news is that you have a really powerful editor at your disposal. The bad news, however, is that you have a really powerful editor at your disposal...and it's easy to get overwhelmed by all the options. So, here are some brief tips to help you out:

- If you've ever tried to create levels for most games (especially most 3D shooters), you'll be pleasantly surprised at how much the fill, draw, and blob functions simplify map making. I was able to create one map in less than 20 minutes, after a little practice.

- To create terrain features for your map, click on one of the 41 hexagon types, then click-and-drag. Don't worry about scale at first, because you can adjust the scale later by merely resizing the borders of the map.

- Keep your first battle design simple. Consider using 2D unit icons, especially if you've played boardgames before.

- If you decide to use 3D symbols (yes, we know, the tanks are way cool), keep in mind that the 3D icons look like 2D on some scenario-editor screens.

- If you feel really cocky, you can use a bitmap editor to create your own icons. Just don't forget to distribute the modified files for your symbols to your friends, or they won't be able to play your scenario.

- Creating forces is equally simple. You just pick a unit type and add squads, individual vehicles and guns, setting unit characteristics with a couple of clicks. You can create entire formations with the copy function, almost as if you were using a word processor.

- For your first few attempts at creating a scenario, don't mess with the climate or the triggers for theater-wide events. It's too easy to screw up a scenario until you have a feel for balance. Remember, the flow is very different from your average turn-based wargame.

- The devil is in the details. This "ground-up" approach of creating a historical scenario from scratch requires extremely accurate Orders of Battle and Tables of Organization and Equipment. A little insight into troop quality and morale wouldn't hurt, either. For those of us without hundreds of battle books in our home collection, a valid library card is always a good idea.

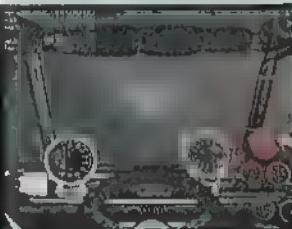
Good luck! — Jim Cobb and Terry Coleman

**Action****Spec Ops**

Having trouble taking out the scuds in Korea or blowing up that news van in Honduras? Here's a cheat for you not-quite-Rangers: First, press Alt-Shift-V. You should hear a clicking noise. Check your inventory, and you'll find a new item: the viewmaster. When you use the viewmaster, the screen should flash blue and your Ranger will jump. The viewmaster not only makes your Ranger invulnerable, it also resets the timer every time you use it. Note that if you switch Rangers, you need to press the key combination again in order to obtain the viewmaster. — Thierry Nguyen

**Monster Truck Madness 2**

Here's a goofy trick to try: When driving past rivers or lakes, detour for a quick dip. You'll find that your truck continues to work even though it's completely underwater. The track announcer's voice will also be garbled, as if your sound card is submerged. — Scott May

**Army Men**

My advice when using the flamethrower is to stand still; you are, after all, made of plastic. But if you are invulnerable (see the cheat codes below), you can run while using the flamethrower by tapping the fire key and moving the joystick (or keypad, if you insist) in the direction you wish to go.



To invoke the following cheats, hit Esc, then type the following codes:

Kahuna You get Explosions, the Omnicient view, and Invulnerability
Telekinetic Lets you teleport Sarge anywhere in the gameworld using the scroll mode

Note that these codes should work with the ARMY MEN cheats from last month's hints and tips article.

— Terry Coleman

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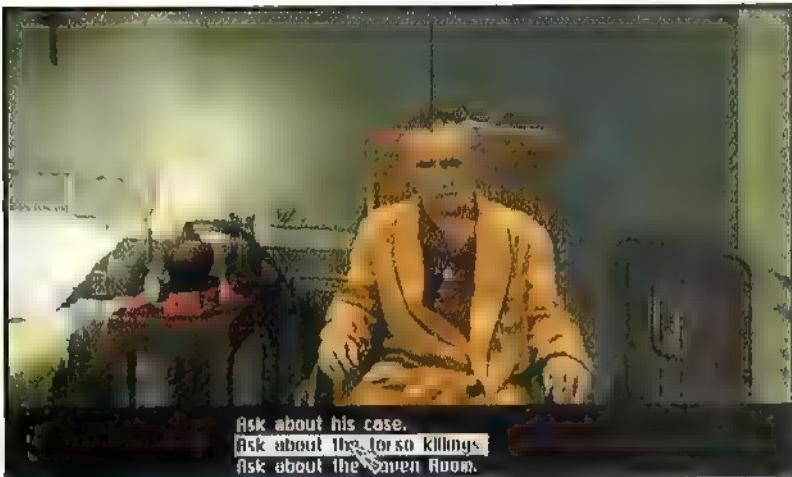
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Adventure/RPG

Black Dahlia

Type in these codes when engaged in the appropriate puzzle:

Leadhead	Solves stained-glass puzzle at museum
Loghouse	Opens cabin-shaped lockbox from Louie's loft
Turnkey	Opens Louie's dresser
Masterlock	Opens Winslow's safe
Ringding	Reveals the correct seal on the scepter at the museum
Arthur	Solves the table puzzle in the Raven's backroom
Cancan	Opens the door in the trance sequence
Triangle	Opens door to the Raven's backroom
Pressure	Opens the secret door near pressure gauges in sewers
Barbell	Opens second door in sewers
Nimble	Solves the candlestick puzzle in Raven's backroom
Sunspot	Opens the planet-door at beginning of second act



Sports

FIFA: Road to World Cup 98

While in the player edit screen, change any player's name to one of the codes below to activate the following cheats:

DOHDOHDOH	Crazy ball
URILOFUS	Invisible walls
XPLAY	Hot potato

While we didn't experience any problems using these cheats, as always, we recommend that you back up your save game files (especially any FIFA RTWC 98 campaign) before trying these out. —Terry Coleman



Simulation



Tank Commander

Speed Kills!

- At high speeds, there's no way you can quickly come to an absolute stop. This means that you'll lose the first-shot advantage.
- Often, you won't see enemy positions until they bang on your rear.
- At high speed, the motor in your tank kicks out at the worst possible time.
- Go too fast and you'll either outrun your support or collide with them while maneuvering.
- Throttle speed five is the highest reasonable battle speed. Go faster only when evading barrages or air strikes and when trying to make the time limit.

Use Your Platoon!

Your other tanks will do a lot of work for you if you let them. If you're up against a time limit, use the **S** and **Shift-1**, **Shift-2** keys to have somebody else deal with harmless things like trucks or MG nests. Your job is to take out those killer antitank positions and, of course, to make it to the designated objective.

To make this work, choose the right formation. If there's high ground or cover to one flank, echelon toward it. In constricted terrain, form a wedge. Use a line only when you zero in on the last target. —Jim Cobb



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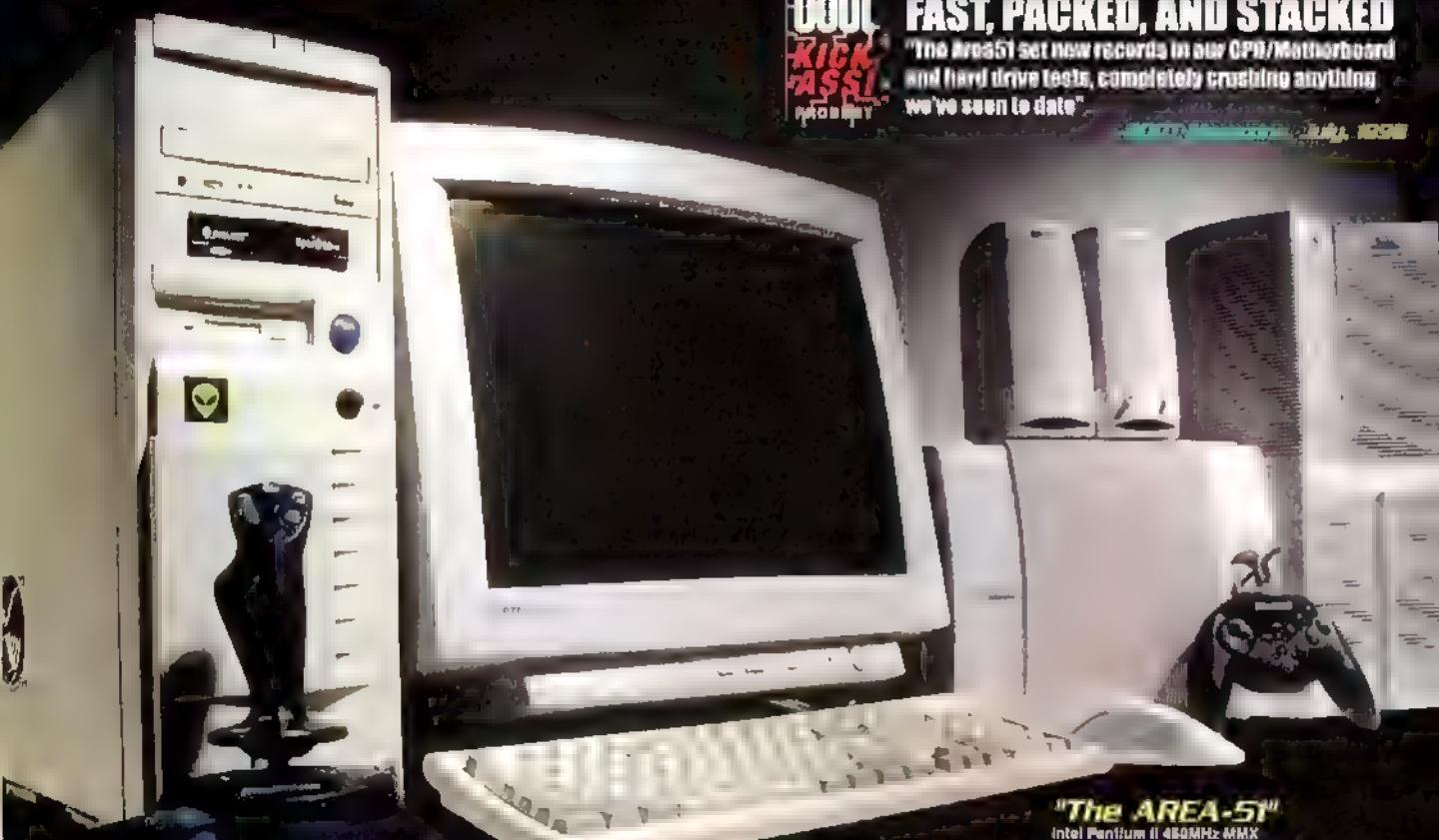


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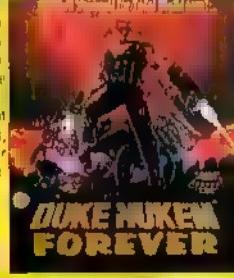


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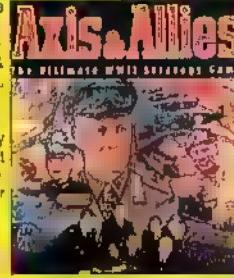


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B.C. 2: War 2	12/98	\$18.99	Hercules M&M 2	11/98	\$23.99	S.W.A.T. 2	07/98	\$47.99	Wargames
B.C. 2: War 2	05/97	\$28.99	Hercules M&M 2 Exp Pk	05/97	\$10.99	Sieg	08/98	\$35.99	Warlords
B.C. 2: War 2	11/98	\$22.99	Hercules M & M 3	11/98	\$44.99	SimCity 2000 Spec Ed	04/97	\$18.99	Warlords 2
B.C. 2: War 2 Fantasy Worlds	11/98	\$24.99	Hollywood Mogul	12/97	\$30.99	SimCity 3000	09/98	\$54.99	Warlords 2 Add On
B.C. 2: War 2 Multiplayer Gold Ed	08/98	\$48.99	Imperialism 2	11/98	\$14.99	Small Soldiers	09/98	\$13.99	Warlords 3
B.C. 2: War 2 Multiplayer Gold Ed	08/98	\$48.99	Incubation	10/97	\$38.99	Seven Kingdoms 2	11/98	\$35.99	Warlords 3 Add-On
B.C. 2: War 2 Multiplayer Gold Ed	08/98	\$48.99	Incubation	10/97	\$38.99	Siege	08/98	\$35.99	Warlords 4
B.C. 2: War 2 Multiplayer Gold Ed	08/98	\$48.99	Industry Giant	04/98	\$38.99	SimCity 2000 Spec Ed	04/97	\$18.99	Warzone
B.C. 2: War 2 Multiplayer Gold Ed	08/98	\$48.99	Industry Giant Game	09/98	\$10.99	StarCraft	04/98	\$36.99	Warzone 2
B.C. 2: War 2 Multiplayer Gold Ed	08/98	\$48.99	Jagged Alien: Doty Game	09/98	\$10.99	StarCraft Expansion	07/98	\$32.99	Warzone 2100
B.C. 2: War 2 Multiplayer Gold Ed	08/98	\$48.99	Jagged Alien: Game 4	09/98	\$14.99	StarCraft Instruction	07/98	\$19.99	Wooden Ship Iron Men
B.C. 2: War 2 Multiplayer Gold Ed	08/98	\$48.99	Lords Realm 2	11/98	\$19.99	StarCraft Retailization	07/98	\$38.99	X-COM: Ter. Inv. Deep
B.C. 2: War 2 Multiplayer Gold Ed	11/98	\$16.99	Lords of Magic	12/97	\$26.99	StarCraft Retailization	07/98	\$38.99	X-COM UFO Defense
B.C. 2: War 2 Multiplayer Gold Ed	11/98	\$16.99	MAX	12/98	\$16.99	StarCraft Retailization	08/98	\$45.99	X-Fire
B.C. 2: War 2 Multiplayer Gold Ed	08/98	\$39.99	MAX 2	04/98	\$11.99	Storm in the West	04/98	\$33.99	West Front
B.C. 2: War 2 Multiplayer Gold Ed	10/98	\$39.99	MTC: Duke Planeswalker	02/98	\$28.99	Tank Resistance 2024	05/98	\$39.99	West Front
B.C. 2: War 2 Multiplayer Gold Ed	10/98	\$39.99	Magic: The Gathering	03/97	\$15.99	Tank Resistance 2024	05/98	\$39.99	West Front
B.C. 2: War 2 Multiplayer Gold Ed	05/98	\$42.99	Majesty: Empire Darklands	05/98	\$48.99	Throne Reich	10/97	\$29.99	West Front

COMPUTER GAMES: WAR

NAME	RELEASE	PRICE	TITLE	RELEASE	PRICE	TITLE	RELEASE	PRICE	TITLE
B.C. Airborne Normandy	08/98	\$39.99	East Front	11/97	\$39.99	Pebble's General	10/98	\$42.99	Tigers on Prowl 2
B.C. Airborne Normandy	01/98	\$44.99	East Front Camp	03/98	\$24.99	Semper Fi	02/98	\$33.99	V Victory Bundle
B.C. Airborne Normandy	11/98	\$44.99	Great Battles Hannibal	11/97	\$34.99	Sid Meier's Gettysburg	10/97	\$20.99	War Among the Mohawk
B.C. Bull Run	05/97	\$21.99	Harrington 4	07/98	\$46.99	Stool Panthers 2	11/98	\$19.99	War in East Rostov
B.C. Chickamauga	08/98	\$43.99	Hannibal 1813	10/98	\$42.99	Stool Panthers 3	11/97	\$26.99	War in Europe
B.C. Gettysburg	12/95	\$18.99	Hannibal in Russia	05/97	\$17.99	Steel Panthers Arsenal	05/98	\$36.99	War in the East Crimea
B.C. War 2	10/98	\$46.99	Open Air W/ Exp Pk 1-2a	05/98	\$22.99	Sto! Panthers Army 1-2a	08/98	\$15.99	War in the East Ilyum
B.C. War 2	11/97	\$42.99	Operation Art of War	06/98	\$39.99	Storm in the West	04/98	\$33.99	War in the East Kiev
B.C. War 2	12/98	\$40.99	Over the Holch	11/98	\$33.99	Tank Resistance	04/98	\$24.99	War in the East Leningrad
B.C. War 2	05/98	\$23.99	Panzer General 2	10/97	\$33.99	Third Reich	10/98	\$29.99	West Front

BOARD GAMES

NAME	RELEASE	PRICE	TITLE	RELEASE	PRICE	TITLE	RELEASE	PRICE	TITLE
B.C. & Robo: Brains	12/94	\$20.99	BattleTech 4th Ed.	12/94	\$21.99	Ferraro's Principals	03/97	\$16.99	Space Marine
B.C. & Robo: Brains	01/95	\$39.99	Belle of War	05/98	\$42.99	Flat Top	12/94	\$29.99	Spanish Civil War
B.C. & Robo: Brains	12/94	\$23.99	Blocks of War	06/98	\$32.99	Handball	03/98	\$32.99	Storm Over Arnhem: Pk
B.C. & Robo: Brains	12/94	\$25.99	Britain Stands Alone	01/95	\$32.99	History of the World	12/94	\$27.99	Storm Over Arnhem: Pk
B.C. & Robo: Brains	12/94	\$27.99	Brilliantia	12/94	\$19.99	Knightmare Cities 2	06/98	\$13.99	Sushi-Japonica War
B.C. & Robo: Brains	12/94	\$28.99	Campaigns Civil War	02/95	\$10.99	Lionheart	10/97	\$33.99	They Met At Gettysburg
B.C. & Robo: Brains	12/97	\$32.99	Cities Majinuus	12/94	\$11.99	Midway	12/98	\$19.89	Tracks to Telluride
B.C. & Robo: Brains	12/98	\$24.99	Colonial Diplomacy	01/95	\$42.99	Napoleon's Battles	12/94	\$24.99	Typhoon 1941
B.C. & Robo: Brains	01/95	\$32.99	Conditioner	01/97	\$38.99	Panzertanz	12/94	\$16.99	Victory in Europe
B.C. & Robo: Brains	01/95	\$29.99	Cities: Emar 1973	09/95	\$29.99	Pincing the Heid	09/95	\$29.99	War of 1812
B.C. & Robo: Brains	01/95	\$27.99	Desert for Dunes	12/96	\$29.99	Rebels & Redcoats 2	04/95	\$25.99	Warhammer 40K
B.C. & Robo: Brains	11/94	\$38.99	Die Habs	11/98	\$30.99	Republic of Rome	12/94	\$29.99	We the People
B.C. & Robo: Brains	03/97	\$32.99	Universals Lost World	01/95	\$29.99	Sparta	06/98	\$24.99	West Front
B.C. & Robo: Brains	11/94	\$38.99	Emperors of Europe	05/98	\$32.99	Sink the Bismarck	12/94	\$26.99	Wooden Ships Iron Men

ROLE PLAYING GAMES

NAME	RELEASE	PRICE	TITLE	RELEASE	PRICE	TITLE	RELEASE	PRICE	TITLE
B.C. DM Guide	02/95	\$20.99	Cyberpunk 2020	05/95	\$17.99	Mage 2nd Ed	02/95	\$21.99	StarWars Revised
B.C. DM Guide	04/98	\$24.99	Deadlands Rulebook	10/97	\$27.99	Mechwarrior	07/95	\$13.99	Traveller
B.C. DM Guide	05/95	\$16.99	Elf Spark	09/95	\$3.99	MERP 2 Softcover	10/95	\$16.99	Underworld Trilogy 3
B.C. DM Guide	08/95	\$25.99	Earthdawn Companion	06/95	\$14.99	Planescape Mon Comp 2	08/95	\$14.99	Vampire 2nd Ed
B.C. DM Guide	08/95	\$19.99	Elfs of Cthulu	02/95	\$20.99	Rifts	08/95	\$21.99	Warhammer Fantasy
B.C. DM Guide	11/95	\$13.99	Elves of N. Vampire	08/95	\$25.99	Robotech	04/95	\$11.99	Warwall
B.C. DM Guide	08/96	\$21.99	Heavy Gear	04/98	\$24.99	Shadowrun 2nd Ed.	12/91	\$20.99	Wonders of Lankhmar
B.C. DM Guide	08/96	\$21.99	Jovian Chronicles	04/98	\$21.99	Shadowrun 3rd Ed.	05/99	\$17.99	Wraith
B.C. DM Guide	11/95	\$23.99	Land of the Empress	02/95	\$23.99	Standard	02/95	\$24.99	West Front
B.C. DM Guide	11/95	\$18.99	Lands of Lore 3	12/98	\$48.99	Phantom 6	04/98	\$17.99	World of Warcraft
B.C. DM Guide	08/98	\$4.99	Magic & Magic 6	04/98	\$17.99	Reaver	09/95	\$24.99	World of Warcraft
B.C. DM Guide	01/97	\$34.99	Not	12/98	\$47.99	Underworld	01/97	\$7.99	World of Warcraft
B.C. DM Guide	03/97	\$34.99	Rule of Mages	10/98	\$44.99	Underworld	02/95	\$24.99	World of Warcraft
B.C. DM Guide	12/97	\$22.99	Ravenhill	10/98	\$35.99	Underworld	08/95	\$24.99	World of Warcraft
B.C. DM Guide	07/98	\$24.99	Septaria Core	08/98	\$48.99	Underworld	02/95	\$24.99	World of Warcraft
B.C. DM Guide	11/98	\$44.99	Swords & Sorcery	09/98	\$48.99	Underworld	08/95	\$24.99	World of Warcraft
B.C. DM Guide	10/97	\$44.99	Thief: The Dark Project	10/98	\$35.99	Underworld	02/95	\$24.99	World of Warcraft
B.C. DM Guide	11/98	\$48.99	Ultima 9 Ascension	12/98	\$52.99	Underworld	08/95	\$24.99	World of Warcraft
B.C. DM Guide	06/98	\$39.99	Ultima Online	09/97	\$49.99	Underworld	02/95	\$24.99	World of Warcraft
B.C. DM Guide	09/98	\$39.99	Ultima Underworld 2	12/92	\$58.99	Underworld	08/95	\$24.99	World of Warcraft
B.C. DM Guide	10/97	\$28.99	Wizardry 8	11/98	\$49.99	Under a Killing Moon	02/95	\$24.99	World of Warcraft

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'WEST FRONT' is a fast-paced platoon-level game of WWII tactical combat. Play in Campaign, random battles or preset scenario format. New mission types & character promotions, new terrain features (N Africa & Europe), 50 new scenarios & 8 new Campaign games, & 16 player Internet/LAN mode. Full-function map & scenario editors let you create your own battles from a database of 500 equipment & unit types.

\$44.99

Talonsoft (War) Release: 9/98 PC CD



COMMANDOS: BEHIND ENEMY LINES This real-time combat game stresses strategy & tactics over firepower. Advanced AI controls over 40 enemy vehicles & troops. Features 24 missions in N Africa & Europe. 6 commandos with unique abilities. 25 accurately modeled weapons & active cameras. & shadow & light effects. Multiplayer on LAN & Internet.

Eidos (Strategy)

\$35.99

Release: 8/98 PC CD



MYTH II: SOULBLIGHTER is the sequel to the huge popular Myth. The Fallen Lords & features an improved engine with animal & 3-D models. 4x fire terrain & 3-D lighting model. New effects include 3-D fire, ambient life & powerful new spells. Also includes improved pathfinding, AI, & new units & terrain. More fun with individual & team rankings and in-game alliances.

Virgin (Strategy)

\$43.99

Release: 11/98 PC CD



DUNE 2000 This multi-player update of Dune II has translucent shroud effects and smoke trails, real-time lighting, and particle-effect explosions. Play one-on-one or on the internet or with 8 on a LAN. All 27 missions have been updated and feature new FMV mission briefings and cutscenes with 6 different actors. Replays & online stores & create teams to carry out orders.

Virgin (Strategy)

\$39.99

Release: 8/98 PC CD



BALDUR'S GATE is set in the legendary Forgotten Realms campaign world. Features a transparent interface and gameplay that uses a real-time mod location of the ADD rules system. There are over 80 monsters to fight, you control a party of six each with unique abilities and personas.

Interplay (Roleplaying)

\$46.99

Release: 8/98 PC CD

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CGW'S MONTHLY READERS' POLL

Each month, 2,000 CGW subscribers are selected at random to rate 100 computer games. The results of that poll are combined with the results of previous months to yield a cumulative average for the best plays in gaming. If you receive a ballot, please return it with your ratings so that other gamers and game publishers can benefit from your feedback.



TOP ACTION GAMES

THIS MO	LAST MO	GAME	COMPANY	SCORE	RATING
1	1	Quake II	Activision	8.64	4.5
2	2	Quake Pack 2: Dissolution	id Software/Rogue	8.60	5
3	3	Quake Pack 1: Scourge	id Software/Ritual	8.60	4.5
4	4	Jedi Knight: Dark Forces II	LucasArts	8.49	4.5
5	5	Jedi Knight: Mysteries	LucasArts	8.44	4
6	6	Tomb Raider	Eidos	8.00	4
7	7	Quake	id Software	7.38	5
8	8	Moto Racer	EA	7.75	4
9	9	The Need for Speed SE	EA	7.74	N/R
10	10	Tomb Raider II	Eidos	7.73	4



TOP ADVENTURE GAMES

THIS MO	LAST MO	GAME	COMPANY	SCORE	RATING
1	2	Curse of Monkey Island	LucasArts	8.19	5
2	1	The Pandora Directive	Access	8.15	N/R
3	3	Blade Runner	Westwood/Virgin	7.81	4.5
4	4	Twinsen's Odyssey	Activision	7.65	5
5	5	Realms of the Haunting	Interplay	7.46	4.5
6	6	Rama	Sierra	7.43	4.5
7	8	The Neverhood	DreamWorks	7.41	4
8	5	Last Express	Broderbund	7.40	4.5
9	9	Circle of Blood	Virgin	7.39	4
10	-	Zork Grand Inquisitor	Activision	7.27	N/R



TOP CLASSIC/PUZZLE GAMES

THIS MO	LAST MO	GAME	COMPANY	SCORE	RATING
1	1	You Don't Know Jack 2	Berkeley Systems	8.34	4.5
2	2	You Don't Know Jack 3	Berkeley Systems	8.04	4
3	3	You Don't Know Jack Movies	Berkeley Systems	7.96	4.5
4	6	Worms 2	MicroProse	7.71	4
5	5	Smart Games Challenge 2	Smart Games Inc.	7.41	5
6	4	You Don't Know Jack Sports	Berkeley Systems	7.58	4.5
7	7	You Don't Know Jack TV	Berkeley Systems	7.1	2.5
8	-	Shanghai Dynasty	Activision	7.38	3
9	8	Power Chess	Sierra	7.31	N/R
10	9	Lose Your Marbles	SegaSoft	6.74	4.5



TOP SIMULATION/SPACE COMBAT

THIS MO	LAST MO	GAME	COMPANY	SCORE	RATING
1	1	Longbow 2	EA	8.49	5
2	2	Wing Commander: Prophecy	Origin	8.43	4.5
3	4	F-22 ADF	JD	7.98	4.5
4	-	F-15	A	7.6	3.5
5	5	MechWarrior 2: Mercenaries	Activision	7.72	4.5
6	6	Fighters Anthology	EA	7.07	3.5
7	8	Flight Unlimited 2	Cooking Class	5.50	4.5
8	-	M1 Tank Platoon	MicroProse	7.13	4
9	7	Flight Sim 98	MicroProse	7.32	3.5
10	9	X-Wing vs. TIE Fighter	LucasArts	7.16	3.5



TOP SPORTS GAMES

THIS MO	LAST MO	GAME	COMPANY	SCORE	RATING
1	1	FIFA Road to World Cup 98	EA	8.1	4.5
2	1	Links LS	Activision	8.08	5
3	2	NHL 98	EA Sports	8.03	4
4	3	NBA Live 98	EA Sports	8.36	4.5
5	-	Jack Nicklaus 5	Activision	8.1	4
6	4	NASCAR Racing 2	Sierra	8.5	5
7	5	Grand Prix 2	MicroProse	7.94	5
8	6	NHL 97	EA Sports	7.86	4.5
9	9	Diamond Mind Baseball 7.0	Diamond Mind	7.81	3.5
10	7	NBA Live 97	EA Sports	7.83	4.5



TOP STRATEGY GAMES

THIS MO	LAST MO	GAME	COMPANY	SCORE	RATING
1	1	Heroes II: Price of Loyalty	New World Computing	8.95	5
2	2	StarCraft	MicroProse	8	4
3	3	Heroes II	New World Computing	8.60	5
4	4	Red Alert	MicroProse	8.55	4.5
5	5	Red Alert: Counterstrike	MicroProse	8.24	4
6	6	Total Annihilation	CT Interactive	8.22	4.5
7	7	Age of Empires	Microsoft	8.04	4.5
8	8	Civ II: Scenarios	MicroProse	7.94	4
9	9	Civ II: Fantastic Worlds	MicroProse	7.93	4
10	10	Ing Alliance: Deadly Games	Sierra	7.52	4



TOP ROLE-PLAYING GAMES

THIS MO	LAST MO	GAME	COMPANY	SCORE	RATING
1	-	Might and Magic VI	EA/Westwood	8.71	4.5
2	1	Diablo	Bizware	8.55	4.5
3	2	Fallout	Interplay	8.6	4.5
4	3	Hellfire	Sierra	8.04	4
5	4	Daggerfall	Bethesda	7.08	4.5
6	-	Shadows Over Rivendell	Sierra	6.4	N/R
7	5	Lands of Lore II	Westwood	6.25	N/R
8	6	Meridian 59	3DO	5.41	3.5
9	7	Ultima Online	Origin	4.82	1.5
10	-	Battlespire	Big Picture	4.02	1.5



TOP WARGAMES

THIS MO	LAST MO	GAME	COMPANY	SCORE	RATING
1	1	Steel Panthers Camp Disko	SSI	8.44	4
2	3	Steel Panthers II: Camp Disko	SSI	8.43	4.5
2	2	Panzer General II	SSI	8.43	5
4	4	Sid Meier's Gettysburg	SSI	8.19	4.5
5	5	Steel Panthers II	SSI	8.07	4.5
6	7	Battleground: Napoleon	Talosoft	7.89	4.5
7	6	Battleground: Shiloh	Talosoft	7.88	5
8	8	Battleground: Bull Run	Talosoft	7.80	4
9	10	Tigers on the Prowl II	HPS	7.77	4
10	9	Battleground: Antietam	Talosoft	7.76	5

Games on unnumbered lines are tied with game on line above ★ – Top game of genre Red = New Game, AD = Adventure RP = Role-Playing, SI = Simulation/Space Combat, ST = Strategy, WG = Wargame, AC = Action, SP = Sports, CP = Classic/Puzzle. Games are retired after two years and become eligible for the Hall of Fame

THIS LAST GAME/ NO. NO. PUBLISHER		GAME GENRE	POLL SCORE	CGW RATING
1	1	Heroes II: Price of Loyalty New World Computing	ST	8.95
2	–	Might And Magic VI: Mana Wars	RP	8.77
3	–	StarCraft Blizzard	ST	8.72
4	3	Quake II Activision	AC	8.61
5	6	Heroes II New World Computing	SI	8.60
4	Quake Pack 2: Dissolution id Software/Rogue	AC	8.60	
5	Quake Pack 1: Scourge id Software/Rogue	AC	8.60	
8	–	FIFA Road to the World Cup 98 EA Sports	SI	8.60
9	7	Links LS Access	SP	8.58
10	12	NHL 98 EA Sports	SP	8.55
8	Diablo Blizzard	RP	8.55	
8	Red Alert Virgin/Westwood	ST	8.55	
13	10	Longbow 2 EA	SI	8.49
11	Jedi Knight: Dark Forces II LucasArts	AC	8.49	
15	12	Steel Panthers Campaign Disk SSI	WG	8.44
29	Jedi Knight: Mysteries of the Sith LucasArts	AC	8.44	
17	15	Steel Panthers II Campaign Disk SSI	WG	8.43
14	Panzer General II SSI	WG	8.43	
18	Wing Commander: Prophecy Origin	SI	8.43	
20	16	You Don't Know Jack 2 Berkeley Systems	CP	8.34
21	17	NBA Live 98 EA Sports	SP	8.30
22	19	Fallout Interplay	RP	8.26
23	20	Red Alert: Counterstrike Virgin/Westwood	ST	8.24
24	25	Total Annihilation GT Interactive	S	8.22
25	Jack Nicklaus 5 EA	F	8.19	
25	Curse of Monkey Island LucasArts	AD	8.19	
20	Sid Meier's Gettysburg Firaxis	WG	8.19	
28	22	The Pandora Directive Access	AD	8.15
23	NASCAR Racing 2 Sierra	SP	8.15	
30	28	You Don't Know Jack 3 Berkeley Systems	CP	8.09
31	27	Steel Panthers II SSI	WG	8.07
32	32	Hellfire Sierra	RP	8.04
32	Age of Empires Microsoft	SI	8.04	
34	31	Tomb Raider Eidos	AC	8.00
35	34	F-22 ADF NovaLogic	SI	7.98
36	Quake id Software	AC	7.98	
37	37	You Don't Know Jack Movies Berkeley Systems	CP	7.95
38	34	Civilization II: Scenarios MicroProse	ST	7.94
38	Grand Prix 2 MicroProse	SP	7.94	
40	42	Civilization II: Fantastic Worlds MicroProse	SI	7.93
41	43	Battleground: Napoleon In Russia TalonSoft	WG	7.89
42	40	Battleground: Shiloh TalonSoft	WG	7.88
43	39	NHL 97 EA Sports	SP	7.86
44	55	Diamond Mind Baseball 7.0 Diamond Mind	SP	7.84
45	40	NBA Live 97 EA Sports	SP	7.83
46	44	Blade Runner Westwood/Virgin	AD	7.81
47	45	Battleground: Bull Run TalonSoft	WG	7.80
48	47	Tigers on the Prowl II HPS	WG	7.77
49	–	F-15 EA/Omni	SI	7.76
46	Battleground: Antietam TalonSoft	WG	7.76	

THIS LAST GAME/ NO. NO. PUBLISHER		GAME GENRE	POLL SCORE	CGW RATING
51	48	Moto Racer EA	AC	7.75
52	50	The Need for Speed SE EA	AC	7.74
53	63	Worms 2 MicroProse	CP	7.73
52	Tomb Raider II Eidos	AC	7.73	
55	48	MechWarrior 2: Mercenaries Activision	SI	7.72
56	61	Smart Games Challenge 2 Smart Games Inc	CP	7.70
57	–	F1 Racing Simulation Ubisoft	SP	7.66
58	53	Twinsen's Odyssey Activision	AD	7.65
51	Fighters Anthology EA	SI	7.65	
60	54	Triple Play 98 EA Sports	SP	7.62
55	Battleground: Waterloo TalonSoft	WG	7.62	
62	58	You Don't Know Jack Sports Berkeley Systems	CP	7.58
63	71	You Don't Know Jack TV Berkeley Systems	CP	7.57
57	Crusader: No Regret EA/Omni	AC	7.57	
65	–	Battlezone Activision	AC	7.54
66	59	Jack Nicklaus 4 Arcadia	SP	7.53
67	60	Jagged Alliance: Deadly Games Sir-Tech	ST	7.52
68	77	Flight Unlimited 2 Looking Glass	SI	7.50
69	63	Realms of the Haunting Interplay	AD	7.46
72	Myth Bungie	ST	7.46	
71	62	Interstate '76 Activision	AC	7.44
83	Virtual Pool 2 Interplay	SP	7.44	
73	–	M1 Tank Platoon MicroProse	SI	7.43
63	Rama Sierra	AD	7.43	
75	67	The Neverhood DreamWorks	AD	7.41
76	63	Last Express Red Qin	AD	7.40
77	70	Dungeon Keeper EA/Bullfrog	ST	7.39
69	Circle of Blood Virgin	AD	7.39	
79	–	Shanghai Dynasty Activision	CP	7.38
80	63	PGA Tour Pro EA Sports	SP	7.37
81	89	Steel Panthers III SSI	WG	7.33
73	Flight Simulator 98 Microsoft	SI	7.33	
83	74	Tripleplay 97 EA Sports	SP	7.32
76	Achtung! Spitfire Avalanche	ST	7.32	
85	78	Power Chess Sierra	CP	7.31
82	Age of Rifles Campaign Disk SSI	WG	7.31	
87	–	Zork: Grand Inquisitor AD	AD	7.27
88	78	MDK Playmates/Shiny	AC	7.27
89	88	X-COM: Apocalypse MicroProse	ST	7.24
90	85	Lords of the Realm II Sierra	ST	7.23
91	–	Grand Theft Auto ASC Games	AC	7.20
92	81	Baseball Mogul Infinite Monkey	SP	7.19
86	Obsidian Segasoft	AD	7.19	
94	90	Leisure Suit Larry 7 Sierra	AD	7.18
95	87	Close Combat: A Bridge Too Far Microsoft	WG	7.17
96	95	X-Wing vs. TIE Fighter LucasArts	S	7.16
97	93	Imperialism SSI	ST	7.15
98	97	FIFA 97 EA Sports	SP	7.11
99	83	Star Wars Rebellion LucasArts	SI	7.10
92	FPS Football Pro '97 Sierra	SP	7.10	

HALL OF FAME

WELCOME TO THE COOPERSTOWN OF COMPUTER GAMES. Games that broke the records, established the benchmarks, and held gamers in delighted trances for hours untold.

Alone in the Dark (I-Motion, 1992)

Cloak-and-dagger horror goes 3D, with shifting camera angles adding to the creepy atmosphere.

The Bard's Tale (EA, 1985)

Pioneered three-point animation, 3D color mazes, and automapping.

Battle Chess (Interplay, 1988)

The Franklin Mint of computer chess games, with violent and funny animation disguising a solid chess engine.

Betrayal at Krondor (Dynamix, 1993)

As rich and imaginative as Raymond Feist's world itself.

Chessmaster (Software Toolworks, 1986)

The Cao Lac of chess, it gets better with each version.

Command & Conquer (Virgin/Westwood Studios, 1995)

Moved beyond DUNE I with innovative features and multi-player play, ushering in the current real-time strategy game explosion.

Day of the Tentacle (LucasArts, 1993)

Offbeat sequel to MANIAC MANSION, the interactive equivalent of a classic Chuck Jones cartoon.

DOOM (id Software, 1993)

Revolutionized PC action games and network gaming; now surpassed in technology, but not gameplay.

Dungeon Master (FTL Software, 1987)

Trend-setting graphics, digitized stereo, and great hack-and-slash from a decade ago.

Earl Weaver Baseball (EA, 1986)

Revolutionary physics-based baseball game pleased both action and statistics fans; still unsurpassed more than a decade later.

Empire (Interstel, 1978)

WWII in space, this mainframe transplant brought elegant mechanics, depth, and unending replayability to the PC.

F-19 Stealth Fighter (MicroProse, 1988)

A "thinking man's" sim, with great missions, in which sneaking around is as fun as dogfighting.

Falcon 3.0 (Spectrum Holobyte, 1991)

Tough, detailed jet sim with ambious AI, graphics, and connectivity to match its realism.

Front Page Sports Football Pro (Dynamix, 1993)

Physics based system, good AI, and unmatched career play make this the ultimate in pigskin play.

Gettysburg: The Turning Point (SSI, 1986)

First variable order of battle changed the look of all American Civil War games on the PC.

Gunship (MicroProse, 1989)

Great character continuity, R&R for fatigued pilots, and even sick leave; best chopper fare until Jane's LONGBOW.

Harpoon (360 Pacific, 1989)

In-depth modern naval battles in real-time, based on the world's Cold War fears.

Kampfgruppe (SSI, 1985)

Its WWII East Front armor battles were a success on multiple platforms.

King's Quest V (Sierra On-Line, 1990)

Redefined the graphic adventure with new parser and VGA graphics.

Lemmings (Psygnosis, 1991)

The lovable cartoon Lilliputians were hits on every platform.

Links 386 Pro (Access Software, 1992)

Topped the leader board in graphics and realism for its era.

M-1 Tank Platoon (MicroProse, 1989)

Realistic sim that properly focused on armored formations rather than on single vehicles, good mission designs.

Master of Magic (MicroProse, 1994)

The atmosphere of MAGIC: THE GATHERING with the sophistication of Civ

Master of Orion (MicroProse, 1993)

Remarkable diplomatic AI, deep and varied technology tree, aliens required radically different playing styles.

Mech Brigade (SSI, 1985)

Improved KAMPFGRUPPE system for modern armored battles.

MechWarrior 2 (Activision, 1995)

A serious treatment of Mech design and resource management, combined with complex and addictive battles, legitimized "giant robot simulations."

Might & Magic (New World Computing, 1986)

First-person, maze-based RPG with huge environment and tough combat

M.U.L.E. (EA, 1983)

A landmark multiplayer strategy game that had no weapons of destruction, just cutthroat competition that made economics fun.

Panzer General (SSI, 1994)

Entertaining wargame with an elegant interface, great campaigns, strong AI, good graphics, and impressive sound.

Red Baron (Dynamix, 1990)

WWII air combat with great graphics, incredible realism, and a versatile replay feature.

The Secret of Monkey Island (LucasArts, 1990)

Comedy that set new standards in writing quality and social sensitivity.

Sid Meier's Civilization (MicroProse, 1991)

CGW's #1-rated game of all time; indescribably addictive world conquest/exploration game

Sid Meier's Pirates (MicroProse, 1987)

Combines pirate adventure, action, RPG, and strategy to make the most successful hybrid of all time

Sid Meier's Railroad Tycoon (MicroProse, 1990)

SMACITY meets 1830 with robber barons for emphasis

SimCity (Maxis, 1987)

Urban planning with fascinating consequences and challenges, the first great software toy.

Starflight (EA, 1986)

Depth, great characters, and a good sci-fi storyline set early RPG standard.

Their Finest Hour (LucasArts, 1989)

WWII sim with great campaigns, realism, and many crew member options.

TIE Fighter (LucasArts, 1994)

Most satisfying Star Wars space-combat game to date lets you live on the dark side.

Ultima III (Origin Systems, 1983)

Coherency and surprising subtlety emphasized role-playing, and set the tone for later Ultimas.

Ultima IV (Origin Systems, 1985)

High-concept RPG explored meaning of virtue and put the role in role-playing.

Ultima VI (Origin Systems, 1990)

RPG as morality play, replete with moral choices and realistic environs

Ultima Underworld (Origin Systems, 1992)

The first truly 3D RPG, and still the most convincing; its dungeon walls were nicely "painted" with texture-mapped graphics.

War in Russia (SSI, 1984)

More realistic than EASTERN FRONT, it captured the essence of the largest land campaign in history.

WarCraft II (Blizzard, 1996)

More cerebral than most real-time strategy games, it offered deceptive depth and personality to spare.

Wasteland (Interplay, 1986)

Derived from Mike Stackpole's Mercenaries, Spies, and Private Eyes, this is the definitive postapocalyptic RPG.

Wing Commander (Origin Systems, 1990)

A hot spaceflight engine, unfolding story path, and great characters.

Wing Commander II (Origin Systems, 1991)

Darker story, grittier feel, sound card advances, and tougher AI made this a sequel of sequels.

Wing Commander III (Origin Systems, 1994)

Surprisingly satisfying FMV space-opera didn't lose the essence of the space-combat game

Wizardry (Sir-Tech Software, 1981)

Defined the computer RPG with maze-based viewpoint and atmospheric spell names.

Wolfenstein 3-D (id Software, 1992)

Smooth-scrolling action blastfest cleverly updated the original, and put shareware back on the map.

X-COM (MicroProse, 1994)

Premier tactical squad-level engine combined with alien tech research and pop culture for a sci-fi game nearly as addictive as CIVILIZATION.

You Don't Know Jack (Berkeley Systems, 1996)

Fresh and irreverent, JACK turned trivia gaming on its collective ear to become the first mainstream CD-ROM with a gleeful gameplay bite.

Zork (Infocom, 1981)

The progenitor of adventure games on the PC; its humor and challenging puzzles seem timeless. The game has since spawned a number of sequels, none of which has equaled the original.

GameSpot: CGW's Home on the Web

Turn to GameSpot For the Fastest Online News and Reviews in Gaming

Liff-Davis has combined the talent and expertise of *Computer Gaming World*, *GameSpot*, and ZDNet to bring you the best gaming resources on the Web. Whether it's the latest game demos, breaking reviews, detailed strategy articles, hot scoops, or online forums, you'll find everything you need to stay on the cutting edge.



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Even expert gamers need help with a game from time to time. That's why when we do a strategy guide at *GameSpot*, we don't sell you short. For the hottest games, *GameSpot*'s editors try to provide you with all the help you need, from start to finish. Through this commitment, *GameSpot* has built a solid reputation for providing the best strategy guides available—for free—anywhere on the World Wide Web.

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INDUSTRY GIANT

JANE'S F-15

STARCRAFT

Online

DEER HUNTER

DIG BY THE SWORD

FLAT EARTH

GRAND THEFT AUTO

SHADOW MATRIX

TRIPLE PLAY 98

ULTIMATE RACE PRO

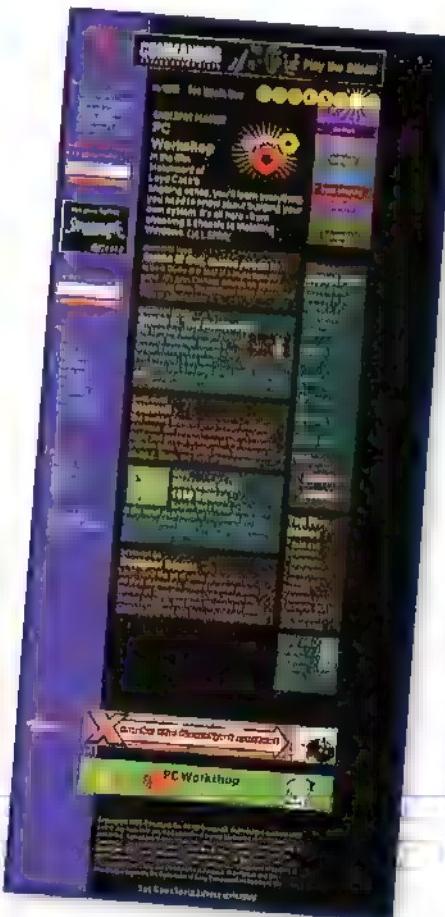
WARBEES

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STARCRAFT

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with the games you're playing. Through *GameGuides.com* you can access *GameSpot*'s library of great, online strategy guides. We've also taken a select few of those guides, redesigned them, and made

them available for download! For a mere \$4.95 (through a secure transaction site) you'll get a book-quality guide—fully searchable and printable—right on your hard drive. A full assortment of official strategy guides will also soon be available, so be sure to bookmark this new site.

Designer Diaries

Have you ever wondered what's going on behind the scenes while those much-anticipated games are in development? *GameSpot*'s Designer Diaries follow the progress of game designers like Jane Jensen, embarking on her third GABRIEL KNIGHT game for Sierra On-Line, and Tim Schafer, who's currently working on GRIM FANDANGO for LucasArts. Tom Hall also gives *GameSpot* readers regular updates about ANACHRONOX, the new game he's developing at ION Storm, and Brian Reynolds, the lead designer of SID MEIER'S ALPHA CENTAURI writes about how that project is coming along. And there's more, so check out the Designer Diaries on [GameSpot](http://cgw.gamespot.com)!

Demos

GameSpot has the most thorough and regularly updated game demo libraries on the Web. You'll find demos of many of the games that we've reviewed recently, including SPEC OPS, MONSTER TRUCK MADNESS 2, SANITARIUM, TEAM APACHE, COMANCHE GOLD, EXTREME TACTICS, INDUSTRY GIANT, and more. **CGW**

Continued from page 35

ULTIMA IX core team went over this with a fine-toothed comb, and we decided, along with Richard and Warren, that we should get back to the original ULTIMA design formula. ULTIMA IX was going to be a game inspired by ULTIMAs IV and VII and nothing else. When I think of that game design I get chills, it was going to be awesome. Our development plan was pretty simple; the old ULTIMA VIII team split into two parts. One group was going to develop CRUSADER while the other group designed ULTIMA IX. When

CRUSADER was finished they would come back to ULTIMA IX and we would put world building and other tasks into full force. The problem was this: CRUSADER ran late and when

it finally shipped no one came back to ULTIMA IX! A full year into our development we suddenly discovered we had no team to implement the design. Things weren't all bad, however, because Electronic Arts had given Origin a mandate to make sure that the ULTIMA franchise was reestablished by ULTIMA IX, no matter how long it took.

Over a long period of time, the new ULTIMA IX team was built. [The team] rebuilt our skills to include 3D graphics and Windows 95. By the summer of 1996 the team was in full production mode and we were finally making steady progress on our schedule. The basic design that gave me chills was still there.

Everything changed because of ULTIMA ONLINE. In December 1996, the ULTIMA IX team was told that everyone (save two programmers) was to begin work on ULTIMA ONLINE immediately following the Christmas holidays. ULTIMA ONLINE had been upgraded from a small research project to a corporate strategic title by Electronic Arts, and it needed to

ship by the next summer at all costs. The crazy part of this story is that it was the right decision at the time. MERIDIAN 59 was already in public beta test and we all figured that if ULTIMA ONLINE didn't make it out by summer it wouldn't make a big splash in the industry. Besides, we knew that ULTIMA IX could ship anytime and be successful. So we presented a stiff upper lip and went onto the ULTIMA ONLINE project.

Not everyone came back [to]

playing ULTIMA IX right now and loving every minute of it. Oh well, who knew?

As a member of the ULTIMA: PAGAN team, how did you feel about CGW's description of the game as ULTIMA: MARIO?

I thought it was an accurate description of the game. The irony is, that's the game the team set out to make. We wanted to create a game with more physical puzzles

managers are never forgiven for shipping a low quality product, even if it was on time. I had hoped that ULTIMA IX was going to change all that and restore our



"I feel that the direction being taken with ULTIMA: ASCENSION is terrifyingly similar to the one we took to design ULTIMA VIII"



ULTIMA IX]. Some were fired, and some, including myself, resigned before returning to the project. Others stayed on ULTIMA ONLINE. Many more resigned shortly after returning to the project after realizing how the project's direction had drastically changed while we were on ULTIMA ONLINE. Of the original 23 team members, only 11 are still on the team. Of those 11, 7 are artists (which is why ASCENSION looks so fantastic). None of the original designers, save Richard Garriott, remains on the team. Only one programmer remains on the team who worked on ULTIMA VIII. Most importantly, none of the original ULTIMA IX team management remains. The most contributing factor that changed ULTIMA IX is this extremely high turnover.

[In] hindsight, there were no big-splash online-only games at E3 that year. ULTIMA ONLINE could have taken an extra year to get really clean and stable and no one in the industry would have beaten them to the punch. The ULTIMA IX team would have remained intact, and you would probably all be



and less conversation than ULTIMA VII: THE BLACK GATE or ULTIMA VII: SERPENT ISLE. The design was inspired largely by PRINCE OF PERSIA. One thing you must remember about ULTIMA VIII is that it was the first product released from Lord British Productions (a producer group at Origin headed by Richard Garriott) after Electronic Arts bought Origin. The team's goal was to ship ULTIMA VIII by fiscal year's end. We achieved that goal, but at the cost of the product's quality. I know now that project



fans' confidence in the product. To be honest, I don't know what will happen and I won't try to predict it. ULTIMA: ASCENSION will certainly be very different than what ULTIMA fans expect.

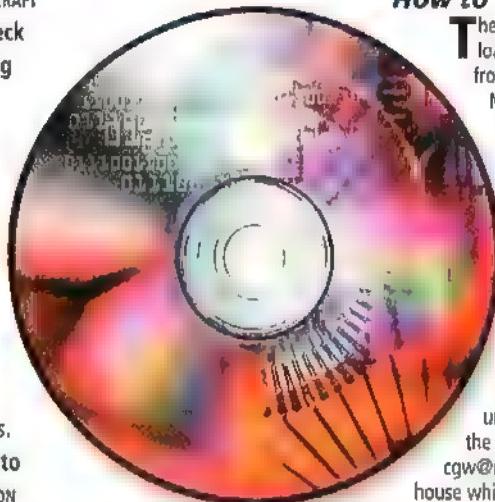
I feel that the direction being taken with ULTIMA: ASCENSION is terrifyingly similar to the one we took to design ULTIMA VIII. CGW

Reach for the Stars

This Month's CG-ROM Has Something for Gamers of All Stripes

If you haven't bought into the *STARCRAFT* craze yet, here's your chance to check out the five-star, CG-Choice-winning real-time strategy game. *CGW* managed to secure this exclusive, five-mission prequel campaign that sets the stage for the full game. If you prefer more action with your sci-fi, then you'll probably want to load up the demo for *DESCENT: FREESPACE*, one of the better space sims out there.

Action aficionados should also check out *DIE BY THE SWORD* and *SPEC OPS*. And for strategy gamers who aren't into sci-fi, we have *COMMANDOS* and *LIBERATION DAY*. Sports fans can see how England and Brazil stack up in *WORLD CUP 98*, and adventurers can play a dashing corsair in *REDJACK: REVENGE OF THE BRETHREN*. Finally, if you want some entertainment during your coffee break, fire up the cute shareware game *Pop! THE BALLOON PUZZLE GAME*.



How to Use the Disc

The CD is Autoplay-enabled and should begin when you load it into the CD-ROM drive. Otherwise, select Run from the Program Manager in Windows 3.x, or Start Menu in Windows 95, and type D:\RUN-ME (where D is the letter of your CD-ROM drive) to run it straight from the CD. You may type D:\INSTALL to create a *CGW* program group on your Windows desktop for future fun. Many demos require the disc to be in the CD-ROM drive in order to run; therefore, we recommend installing the demos from our disc.

How to Get the CD-ROM

To subscribe to the CD-ROM version of the magazine, call (303) 665-8930. If you already receive the magazine without the CD, you must wait until your current subscription expires before receiving the CD version. Please address subscription complaints to cgw@neodata.com. Neodata is a magazine fulfillment house which is not owned or operated by Ziff-Davis.

September CD Titles

PRODUCT NAME	PLATFORM	DIRECTORY	EXECUTABLE
C&C Tiberian Sun AVI	W95	tiberian sun	sizzle.mov
Commandos	W95	commandos	commandos.exe
Descent: Freespace	W95	freespace	fsdemo10.exe
Die by the Sword	W95	die by the sword	dbts_demo.exe
DirectX 5.2	W95	directx	dxsetup.exe
EarthLink opt 1	W95	earthlink1\win95	setup.exe
EarthLink opt 2	W95	earthlink2\win95	setup.exe
Flight Unlimited II patch	W95	fu2 upgrade	fu2upgrade.exe
Liberation Day	W95	liberation day	ldaydemo.exe
Overseer patch	W95	overseer patch	tex5b101.exe
Pop!	W95	pop	installpop.exe
RedJack	W95	redjack	redjack.exe
Sanitarium	W95	sanitarium patch	sanipatch1.exe
SpecOps	W95	spec ops	so_demo.exe
StarCraft	W95	sc_cgw	setup.exe
World Cup 98	W95	world cup 98	wc98_english.exe



GREENSPEAK

Girl Trouble

Or, a Philosophical Meandering on the Merits of Polygonal Butt Jiggle

I am a guy.

I hope this doesn't come as too much of a shock to my friends and members of my family, who presumably stopped questioning my gender around the time I turned 30 and—aware of impending sag—I finally gave up on the hot-pants-and-halter-top look.

As a gamer, I'm glad I'm a guy. Because, as a guy, I constantly get to have my baser instincts satisfied by the incessant pandering of the computer gaming industry. Exhibit A: Lara Croft's breasts. Actually, let's make that Exhibits A and B. The thing is, we don't really need to catalog all the examples, do we? Because there are so many of them and we all know what they are. It just seems to me that the knuckle-dragging, frat-house mentality of game designers and publishers is reaching a fever pitch of late, and I'm not sure what it means. All I know is, I'm suddenly seeing polygonal cleavage wherever I look, and, after looking many times (because it's my job, as a journalist), I've decided that I'm offended.

Please, everyone, let's all put our

clothes back on and calm down.

Let's take, for example, the recent Electronic Entertainment Expo in Atlanta. Here we have a convention dedicated to showing off the latest, cutting-edge computer technology—a monument to human scientific, mathematic, and creative thinking—yet the



JEFF GREEN

All I know is, I'm suddenly seeing polygonal cleavage wherever I look.

atmosphere of the show resembles nothing so much as an auto industry convention circa 1950. If it wasn't enough for you that every other game on the show floor featured jiggly half-naked female protagonists, you could always just ogle the jiggly half-naked booth babes, whom the

game companies hired to entice dolts like me into heading their way.

And you know what? It half worked. As part of my research for this column, I went deep undercover as a typically

unenlightened, mouth-breathing pig (I took drama classes in high school), and visited the SegaSoft booth, where I had my picture taken with the latex-clad VIGILANCE babes. Here's the deal, though: I admit that not only do I not even know what this game is, or care, but I also didn't even bother to find out while I was in their booth. All I did was stand in line with the other sheepish-looking losers and get my picture taken. Then I moved on. Since I can honestly say I'll never play this game, the question is: Did they get what they wanted?

Elsewhere at the convention, I was treated to an enthusiastic demonstration of SPACE BUNNIES MUST DIE, an amusing-looking

my female friends in the industry, or female gamers in general, deal with this stuff. You really have to hand it to them for sticking around. Because if the tables were turned, we couldn't handle it. As soon as some group of women designed a first-person shooter with a male protagonist—let's call him, say, Dirk Manhandle—prancing around in a butt thong, shaking his tuhkus, we'd flee from our computers ASAP and find the nearest baseball game or car to repair. We wouldn't play this game for one minute, lest anyone see us do it or, even worse, we found ourselves actually enjoying it.

What I really want to say to any woman, girl, or grrl reading

TOMB RAIDER-style action game that might be cool, if for nothing else than the fact that Bo Diddley and the Reverend Horton Heat are on the soundtrack. However, rather than focusing on elements like—oh, I don't know—gameplay, a huge portion of the demo was spent demonstrating how the female protagonist's butt jiggle was more "fluid" than Lara Croft's. This was a feature. This was important. This was something a programmer spent time on. This was supposed to make me like the game. And you know what? It half worked.

■ ■ ■

I'm kidding, but I'm not kidding. Honestly, I don't know how

this magazine, then, is this; I'm sorry. We suck. I'm glad that you're hanging in there, forming guilds, writing Web 'zines (try www.grrlgamer.com for a great one), and generally not hating our guts. Okay? Thanks.

All right, so much for that. Are we alone again, guys? Cool.

Yo, bro—have you checked out the legs on that FORSAKEN chick? Mama! Somebody hose me down here! CGW

What Jeff doesn't realize is that his blatant attempts to reach out to female gamers, while still embracing his fundamentally sexist viewpoint, are as transparent as they are pathetic. Go ahead and call him a girly-man at jhgreen@zd.com.



Another lousy editorial assignment.

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Not always satisfied with being the get-away driver, you allow Tread to hone his skills in close combat. He considers it R&R.

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YOU CONTROL EACH COMMANDO



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EIDOS
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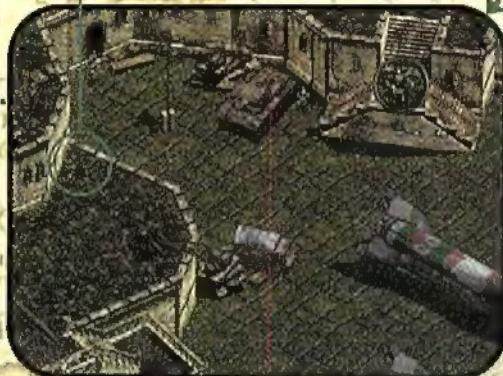
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Call in your sniper to weaken enemy fortifications and expose this Nazi stronghold to a weapons raid. To him every Nazi looks like the one that took out his family.



You send in your pyro lovins' munitions expert to take out enemy mobile missile capability. Apparently, there's plenty of dynamite to go around.

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